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WHAT WE CAN'T AFFORD

When the Red Army is demobilised, the Russian soldier will receive no gratuity. He will not expect one. He will be laying down his victorious arms to play his part in the communal rebuilding of his devastated country; and in the U.S.S.R., where nobody has made profits out of the war, there will be no fear of unemployment. In Britain things have to be ordered differently. On demobilisation all members of the Services will receive two months' leave on (taxed) pay, with an additional day's paid leave for each month of foreign service; and tax-free gratuities will also be issued, ranging—after five years' service—from £18 for a private to £135 for a battalion commander.

We have no doubt that Sir John Anderson's announcement of these scales will occasion grave disappointment in the Services. The paid-leave provisions are reasonably generous, but officers will have had in mind the last war precedent, which established a lump-sum award of a year's pay for five years' service overseas, or of half that amount if the service had been at home. For other ranks the ex-gratia payment is to be approximately the same as in 1918, but against this the cost of living has risen. In effect, the Government has said: "We cannot afford, without the risk of worse inflation, to distribute capital sums on a scale comparable with that of a generation ago; and the Serviceman will not need them in view of all our other plans for retraining, reinstatement, social security and full employment."

The Government can at least be acquitted of false pretences. To promise vote-catching cash benefits without willing or planning the full production which alone can give them real value would be hypocrisy. The question is whether the Government has such a will or such plans. The evidence so far is that, in every field of economic activity, the Cabinet is dominated by men wedded to the restrictionist policy on which the present phase of monopoly-capitalism is based, and that it will reproduce, after the war, the old fatal conditions of under-consumption and under-employment. It is this prospect which dismays the serving sailor, soldier and airman. He may grumble now at the dashing of his hopes that his service would have earned him, on discharge, a capital nest-egg sufficient to help him buy a house (since none can be rented), or at least furniture for a home. He may contrast his lot unfavourably with that of fellow-citizens whose "essential" labour or business enterprise at home has ended in pretty well-lined pockets. But his real, deep-seated concern is lest he is getting now only a foretaste of the "Can't Afford It" attitude which follows inevitably from refusal to plan and secure full production, and which makes nonsense of reconstruction, Beveridge and all. If that be the future, even more liberal gratuities would be small consolation; nor could the "demobbed" Service man take much comfort from the thought that, provided (as he will be) with a civilian suit, he need not sell matches in a uniform made shabby by the grime of battle.

Across the Oder

Russian operations have passed into a new phase. Having secured bridge-heads across the Odor between Küstrin and Fürstenberg, Marshal Zhukov has possibly reached, for the time being, the limit of his westward sweep. The role which he is fulfilling is to level at Berlin a direct threat so menacing that the enemy must mass much of his reserves on the Frankfurt front. Meanwhile, on the northern wing, Marshals Cherniakovsky and Rokossovsky have still to complete the large task of destroying the German forces in East Prussia and Pomerania—a task rendered harder, in the case of Pomerania, by the enemy's retention still of the important rail centres of Posen and Schneidemühl. In the south, after a brief pause, Marshal Koniev has made a move of great potential significance. Exploiting bridgeheads won across the Oder between Breslau and Oppeln, he appears to be striking north-west—the beginning, it may be, of a vast turning movement through Saxony; though it must be remembered that he has to reckon with powerful German forces on his flank, in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. If the Allied offensive in the West can strike with sufficiently concentrated weight, northern Germany will be in great peril. Indeed, General Dittmar, in his latest broadcast, frankly admitted that the game was up. Rumour credits Himmler, however, with the intention of holding, as a last resort, the "inner fortress" of Bavaria, Austria and the Protectorate.

Peace in Athens ?

Negotiations for a definite peace in Greece are hanging fire; but, unless General Plastyras' Right Wing supporters wreck them, it looks as if they will end in the acceptance by E.A.M., with few modifications, of the Government's terms. The broad fact is, we take it, that the population of the interior, sympathetic though it is to E.A.M., is weary of strife and very hungry. Failing to get a general amnesty, the E.A.M. delegates had in the end to content themselves with an assurance that no one shall be punished for taking up arms, but that persons accused of common-law crimes will be tried and punished. How much or how little this means cannot yet be judged. It is proper that conspicuous acts of gangsterism should be punished. But it is not proposed that similar acts by the Government's supporters shall be penalised, although English eye-witnesses have reported the shooting of E.L.A.S. prisoners by officers of the Mountain Brigade in the streets of Athens and the beating of prisoners in the gaols by the gendarmerie. A loosely worded clause of this kind can easily be abused. Another penalty to which the supporters of E.A.M. are now exposed is unemployment. All its members were at an early stage dismissed from the public utility undertakings, and the same fate is now overtaking the employees in the banks. There are, moreover, about 10,000 active members of E.L.A.S. who have been sent as prisoners into internment in Egypt. It is not clear that the peace terms provide for their release, nor do they cover the case of the men interned, to the number of about four thousand, after the mutiny against the King last spring in Egypt. The chief weapon, however, of which the British authorities dispose is still food. There has been as yet no relaxation of the blockade; a formal order forbids the transport of food across the lines laid down in the truce. The conclusion of peace will presumably end that extreme form of pressure, but we should like to have an assurance

that U.N.R.R.A. will return. In spite of everything, E.A.M. is still alive among the masses, and even contrives to bring out its newspapers underground. The notion, spread through British official channels, that the Socialist, Agrarian and Liberal wings of E.A.M. are deserting it would seem to be completely mistaken. On the contrary, the parties of the Left are discussing their unification with a view to the elections.

M. Pierlot Resigns

The decision of the Executive of the Belgian Socialist Party to withdraw their representatives from the Pierlot Cabinet made its fall inevitable. A despatch which we print on a later page from a correspondent in Belgium reveals clearly why the Prime Minister and the *émigré* members of his administration lost popular confidence. Thanks to intervention by the Allied Military Authority, M. Pierlot had had one reprieve. He may protest that it is to Allied failure to provide shipping and supplies, rather than to his own lack of good intentions, that the halting progress of Belgian reconstruction must be ascribed. In fact, M. Pierlot is paying the penalty for endeavouring to re-import into his country the political tactics and outlook of pre-war days instead of drawing on the Resistance for new men and methods.

France and Syria

A minor problem which may or may not have engaged the attention of the Big Three is the recent deterioration in relations between France and Syria and the Lebanon, whose local Governments have been recognised by both Britain and France as independent. The present attitude of the Syrian and Lebanese administrations is to demand the transfer to their jurisdiction of the French-controlled *Troupes Speciales*. This the French are unwilling to do unless France is recognised as having a "pre-eminent and privileged position" in the Levant States; but neither Syria nor the Lebanon is prepared to accord such recognition or even, apparently, to enter into an alliance with France. It is believed that Ibn Saud, to whom Syria is reported to have appealed for support, has counselled moderation; and it is most unlikely that the Levant Governments will be given any encouragement by Russia or Turkey to provoke an immediate clash which would distract the Allies from the business of ending the war in Europe. But the present tension must sooner or later be allayed if the whole relationship between the Western Powers and the Arab world is not to be bedevilled. The French decision to send General Catroux to Syria as mediator is welcome; but the attitude revealed in Parliament by General Spears since his return from the Levant is calculated to arouse deep French suspicions that British imperialism has strategic intentions in that area. Mr. Churchill will do well to disabuse France—and, still more, the U.S.S.R.—of any such (we trust unfounded) impression.

Priorities and European Chaos

Appalling is the only word for the plight of the liberated areas of Europe. This is partly a question of the restrictions that have been put upon U.N.R.R.A. They prevent it from giving help in the most valuable form of aiding in the reconstruction of European productive power. It is partly a matter of politics. But mainly it is a matter of wrong planning, based on the assumption of an earlier German collapse. The United Nations have not enough transport or enough mobilised economic man-power simultaneously to conduct great campaigns in Europe and Asia and to feed and re-equip the liberated countries. They are consequently faced with impossible problems of military and civil priorities. Offensives cannot be halted when plans have been made. The liberated countries are wanting both arms and food, and also the means of starting up their damaged industries and services. It is simply impossible for all these needs to be met at once; and the result is chaos in France and Belgium. The immobilisation of loaded ships in the Pacific before the Germans collapsed was a most unfortunate error; but it must not be allowed to mean sheer disaster for the peoples whom we have liberated. We must spare some transport for them, as well as enlarge our ideas of what they need for re-equipment in addition to show relief.

Dollar Diplomacy

Lord Keynes is said to have made it clear to the Americans that this country's post-war difficulties will not be solved—indeed, that they would be greatly aggravated—by a gigantic American loan given on condition of a British promise to observe the gold standard and to remove all regulation of foreign trade and foreign exchange. Yet this notion is still being actively canvassed in the United States, and appears to be the basis of the opposition which American bankers are putting up to the Bretton Woods plan—which is criticised in the United States for exactly opposite reasons from those which make us doubtful about it in Great Britain. There seems to be a tendency in the United States to regard the contingent offer of loans, not only to ourselves but also to other countries, including the Soviet Union, as a means of ensuring the dominance of American policy in the peace settlement in both its economic and its political aspects. The plain fact, however, is that big American loans will aggravate instead of easing post-war trade and exchange problems, unless they are accompanied by a comprehensive revision of American commercial policy. Unless the Americans are prepared to take far more European goods in payment, we had better do without American loans, and take in one another's washing; and we are certainly not prepared to let America regard loans as a means of enforcing either a political or an economic settlement which is not capable of standing on its own legs.

Prisoners in the Far East

Few of the world's horrors are more loathsome than the fate of the British prisoners in Japanese hands. The fact that the Japanese are taking sadistic revenge for the past insults of white men makes their present savagery no more easy to bear. The position of the wives and relatives of these men who died of hunger and neglect in the foulest of tropical climates is heartrending. The Foreign Secretary has been criticised for showing less energy than the Americans show for U.S. prisoners in working for their release or better treatment. These criticisms are unfair; we can trace no lack of good intentions or endeavours. But, in the House of Commons last week, D. L. Lipson, Member for Cheltenham, made a suggestion which Richard Law might have treated more seriously. Lipson asked if it would not be worth while to approach the Soviet Union in the matter. Since the Protecting Power is unable to do anything with the Japanese, would not, he said, the Japanese be more likely to listen to the Russian Government, seeing that they must be anxious to maintain relations with the U.S.S.R.? This is a line of approach worth pursuing.

Beveridge Conference

The Liberal Party is confidently putting forward a very large number of candidates, many of them young, and appealing for a campaign fund of £200,000. The programme that emerged from the annual Assembly of the Party will be attractive to many people who have no wish to perpetuate Tory rule yet who are unwilling to support a Labour Party which is variously criticised by some as Socialist and therefore revolutionary, and by others as Conservative, dominated by trade-union interests and committed to State bureaucracy. Liberalism, by way of contrast, is upheld as practical and pro-progressive; to vote Liberal is to vote for Beveridge, person and policy. After a rather one-sided debate on employment policy, in which Sir William severely lectured the free-trade enthusiasts, a resolution demanding Home Rule for Scotland slipped through on to the record without a stir. The Assembly was not so enthusiastic about Dumbarton Oaks. Some delegates wanted to give the smaller States a larger share in decisions: spheres of influence were regarded with disfavour by the advocates of Federalism. It is too soon to estimate the degree of success that the Liberal Party may gain at a general election. It is not likely to be large because our system tends to favour two parties, representing the two main economic forces. The great days of Liberalism were those in which the effective choice was between the Conservative landowning and aristocratic interest and the middle-class and manufacturing interest. To-day Liberalism appeals mainly to a somewhat vague floating vote and it is likely at best to win a small number of three-cornered fights. A small number of able members may, however, be important.

Public Relations

In its latest broadsheet (*Planning*: No. 23) P.E.P. concludes that there is a valid case for continuing in peacetime conditions the system developed under the impact of war, whereby each Department of State has a Public Relations or Information branch. The authors admit the existence of possible dangers: the provision of "information" or "background news"—*e.g.* in its bearing on foreign policy—may only too easily change into the exercise of persuasive pressure on public opinion in order to stifle criticism. They suggest, however, that these risks can be countered by the vigilance of Parliament and press; and that, as the functions of the State increase in the social and economic life of the community, it is of vital importance that its purposes and methods should be clarified not merely in little-read Parliamentary debate but in popular language. The case, thus argued, is not wholly convincing. We agree that the more light thrown on the doings and intentions of Departments the better; and there is every thing to be said for amplifying and improving the provision of statistical and other factual data. But though access by journalists to Departments should be facilitated, and the "raw material" for critical explanations should be freely furnished to Fleet Street, the "manufactured" hand-out is open to grave objections—the weightiest being that it is too apt to be published by newspapers ready-made, headlines and all, without regard to its bias or the possibility that its "facts" have been selected with partiality.

The Search for a World Capital

The palace which the I.L.O. had built in Geneva has been standing vacant since the tenant evacuated to Montreal in the early days of the war. Now, the I.L.O., presumably, will have to look for new quarters; for nobody seems to want it to go back to Geneva, where its buildings and those of the League might be turned to good use as the headquarters of a new World University of International Studies. The World Organisation projected at Dumbarton Oaks will also be looking out for new quarters; for Switzerland with its preference for neutrality to League obligations and its geographically awkward situation, is not likely to be chosen again—especially as the Russians would certainly object. The question is where either the World Organisation or the I.L.O. can be put with a reasonable minimum of argument and a fair prospect of convenience. The Hague, headquarters of the World Court, is of course possibility; Antwerp and Copenhagen both have their backers; and there is also support for the idea of a brand-new town, essentially international from the outset and perhaps placed under purely international administration. But such a town would have to be somewhere. London is another possible answer; but would either Stalin or the Americans agree? This delicate problem may have to be settled soon for Montreal will be a very awkward centre during the critical period of post-war readjustment.

PARLIAMENT : 'Ware Cyclists !

Wednesday, noon.

It must, said cynics and cyclists, be a symptom of the impending disruption of the Coalition that it should have been thought necessary now to bring in a Bill obliging cyclists to carry red rear lamps after the war. No single party, it is felt, would risk losing the votes of 10 million cyclists; all must share the blame. All the same it was a little difficult to follow Noel-Baker's brisk and urgent rendering of the Ministerial *cliché*, "We need this Bill now." His general argument, however, seemed adequate, and the opposition, though vigorously voiced from both sides of the House, did not cut much ice; Colonel Marlowe, indeed, seemed to think that it originated in, so to speak, the political red-light district.

Members pointed out that this so-called "class legislation" against cyclists was desired by no one more ardently than by such fairly numerous working-class road-users as lorry-drivers and bus-drivers. Baxter was against it because it represented "increased regimentation of the public" by the Labour Party (including, presumably, Lord Leathers, who introduced it). The Attorney-General torpedoed one of the cyclists' main arguments, that a cyclist would not be able to claim compensation because he would not be able to prove that his rear lamp, damaged in an accident, had been in fact alight. He said that the onus of proof lay quite certainly on the motorist.

With the tremendous developments on the Eastern front, with Parliament's chief stars away for the "Big Three" meeting, with the improvement in the Greek situation, there has indeed been an atmosphere of triviality, irrelevance and end of term impermanence about much recent business; and 'flu and laryngitis have helped to deplete attendances. There has been some worthy drudgery, such as the Local Authorities Loans Bill, in which George Benson and Arthur Jenkins were effective Labour spokesmen; while, on the Licensing Planning Bill, Lady A., tense and shrill, whipped thirty Members into Rhys Davies's Local Option lobby.

On Friday there was an interesting debate on the position of R.A.F. Education Officers, who, despite their R.A.F. uniform and their non-educational duties, are civilians, paid and compensated at civilian rates and with none of the rights attaching to Service status. Sinclair, who is never dull but sometimes slightly too histrionic, explained exactly how this situation arose and was unwilling to change it.

Two statements on Tuesday—Grigg's on home leave from overseas, about which there has been some confusion and discontent, and Anderson's on the end-of-service gratuities, were too long to be digestible by ear. On Wednesday morning Dick Law thought up a new evasion, when asked in a supplementary if he remembered an inconvenient fact: "I don't think I said anything to indicate that I had forgotten it."

By a foolish slip, the leader of the anti-Gothic forces in the debate on the rebuilding of the House was described last week as Rostron Duckworth (M.P. for Moss Side). He was in fact Arthur Duckworth (M.P. for Shrewsbury).

PONTIFEX MINOR.

BLACK SEA FRUIT

The least expert of us could have drawn up a political agenda for the meeting of the Triumvirate. They must deal with the immediate future of Germany; they cannot ignore political difficulties in Poland, Greece and Yugoslavia; they may touch on Russia's need for loans when she faces her immense task of reconstruction; they may discuss the part she is prepared to play in the Far East. Yet the real subject of this conference must be something wider and more fundamental. Can the two Western Powers attain in their dealings with the Soviet Union a relationship of confidence and co-operation? It does not yet exist, and it will not be easy to create. The difficulty is not merely that the Western Powers are "pluto-democracies." We have also to consider the fact that Russia stood apart from the formative experiences—the Catholic tradition, the Reformation and the bourgeois revolution—that made Western civilisation. For a quarter of a century she has led a life of isolation, painfully aware of the hostility of the ruling classes in the West. That her armies have played such an outstanding part in winning the land-war in Europe may have deepened her pride; it has not relaxed her wary self-reliance.

These are the psychological conditions of an uneasy relationship. Furthermore, for the first time in world-history three Great Powers, and only three, confront each other. A balance of power such as our fathers aimed at, where there were six Great Powers or seven, is no longer attainable. To create an effective international society by calling in States of the second and third rank cannot be easy. The sooner France and other lesser Powers have a voice in the settlement the better; but, for the moment, the Big Three have a monopoly of armed force. This makes their potential division the more perilous.

Most of us know, though few of us venture to say plainly, what is the real difficulty in reaching a reasonable settlement of the German and other questions. Neither the West nor the Russians are at ease about their relationship when they look twenty years ahead: each tends to shape the future on strategical lines. The Russians fear that big Business, American and British, may take over the industrial assets of defeated Germany, with the intention of using them one day in the final struggle against Communism. To banish that danger they talk of stripping Germany of its mechanical equipment, even if this should mean the acceptance of a permanently lower standard of life by all Germany's neighbours. "Better poverty," some may argue, "than the risk of a third world war." Given this suspicion of British and American motives, it is easy to render any argument for economic common sense suspect.

On their side the Russians seek to ensure their future safety, first of all, by creating a wide sphere of influence beyond their Western frontier—a *glacis*, which they must dominate in the political sense. In most of the States that compose it they are backing governments based on a loose coalition under Communist leadership, which will faithfully revolve in their orbit. Where, as in Yugoslavia, they have a leader of genius and the tradition of Slav brotherhood to help them, this solution works well. In Poland, a Catholic country poisoned by bitter memories, Stalin's solution, accepted by the British, has failed. The combination of Mr. Mikolajczyk and his Peasant Party with the Committee of the Lublin Poles has been thwarted by the intransigence of the London Poles. There is still apparently some hope of a compromise, and Mr. Roosevelt is said to be opposed to the extravagant, precarious plan of compensating Poland for the loss of territory east of the Curzon Line by offering them a great area of Germany up to the Oder and Neisse. From this area millions, who were to be transferred into Germany, are already in flight from the Red Army. As to the final frontier we may hear more when the Big Three report.

Turning their eyes farther West again, the Big Three must deal with another significant discrepancy between Anglo-American and Russian policy. Partly because they undervalue political warfare, partly because they dread any beginning of revolution, London and Washington are preparing to govern their zones directly, under a military occupation, which is to stretch over an indefinite number of years. Germans will be employed only in subordinate positions, and the emergence of a German Government lies, in their plans, far ahead in time. We will not stop to enquire whether any government of foreign soldiers and administrators could hope to solve the intricate problems, political, economic and spiritual, that will arise. The point is that the Russians were at one time thought to favour a very different plan which they may not have abandoned altogether. It is still within their power to use the selected prisoners who have rallied to them in the Free German Movement as the nucleus round which to form a German Government. This plan has its obvious dangers. Even under Russian control, would a regime headed by Field Marshal Paulus make a genuine end of Prussian militarism and the Junker ascendancy? But it would presumably be a temporary stage, during which the Allies might discover the native forces capable of rebuilding a sounder German society. If these are the alternatives between which we must choose, we should decidedly prefer the Russian plan, though we perceive its risks. But no great ingenuity is required to give this scheme a sinister cast. It can be interpreted as a return to the alliance of Rapallo: a Germany ruled by anti-Nazi generals might be a perilous element in Europe; nor would its subordination to Russian control, military and political, endear it to Tory minds.

Much turns on the reception of the proposals Moscow has made, both to Washington and London, for reconstruction loans or long-term credits up to an immense total. These would be spent chiefly on machinery. The difficulty in our case is purely financial. We are heavily in debt, and our balance of trade is adverse: as soon as possible we must aim at securing a return for our exports. That is not America's case: she can afford to lend, and it will only be by lending on a great scale abroad that she can achieve full employment. But will she try to use her surplus as an instrument of policy? That, in the case of Russia, might be an unlucky inspiration. In the past the Soviet Union, at a heavy cost to her people, rejected foreign borrowing, though it offered an easy way out of her economic struggles, because she was bent on retaining her full freedom of action. The idea, attributed to Mr. Roosevelt, of making a loan dependent on Russia's undertaking not to sponsor Communist governments in Europe is naïve, and we scarcely think Mr. Roosevelt capable of anything so unrealistic.

It is not possible, if it were desirable, to go back to the old Liberal rule of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other peoples. None of us can be indifferent to the kind of government our neighbours maintain, because an ultra-nationalistic government, even if it is not actually Fascist, will be in the international field anti-social, if not bellicose. In concrete terms, the time has gone by when Europe can tolerate a Poland run by Pilsudski's colonels or a Hungary managed by Horthy's aristocrats. Peace and international co-operation can be secured in Europe only by sweeping social changes.

The Russians, none the less, would be wise to pay some attention to criticisms and suggestions from Westerners with their different democratic tradition. In our view, for example, the preoccupation of our Russian Allies with territorial aspects of security is excessive. When Germany is disarmed and the Nazi machine of terror broken for ever, the hope of a lasting peace depends not so much on the redrawing of frontiers or the uprooting of populations as on setting all Europe to the task of rebuilding the civilisation that has come so near to total destruction. Ours is a lost continent unless it can turn its thoughts from power to welfare. One urgent need faces us, and that is to set every idle hand to work again, whether in France or in Poland, in Germany or in Italy. So soon as we all sit down in earnest to plan the reconstruction of the European homeland, questions of sovereignty will sink into their proper place. The best way, as we see it, to counter Russia's suspicions and pave the way for co-operative reconstruction is that America should grant her the loan she seeks without political conditions that imply distrust. More certainly than anything else this would assure her that the West accepts her as the Great Power she is, and means to live with her in friendship.

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BEHIND THE FRONT IN BELGIUM AND HOLLAND

[FROM A CORRESPONDENT WITH THE B.L.A.]

IN Belgium and southern Holland I have watched, concentrated in five months, the process of disillusion which in Britain was spread over the years from 1940 to 1945. In the early days of the liberation there was somewhat the same spirit abroad as in Britain in 1940. They had faced in comradeship the occupation as we faced in comradeship the threat of invasion and the blitz. They hoped to see that comradeship preserved in their new, free life, and reflected in a new community spirit, in new community organisation.

Belgium escaped the worst of war's destruction. Her cities and villages, her factories and mines and power houses, were still intact. Freedom had come almost in a night. Hungry people in Belgium felt the world at their feet. But it soon began to appear that things were not quite as they hoped. The victorious Allied march slowed down and then came almost to a stop. Instead of getting better, the food position grew worse. Coal became desperately short. Unemployment mounted to a quarter of a million.

These material disappointments might perhaps not have mattered very much if they had not been accompanied by emotional disappointments. They had hoped for a government from among themselves, from among those who had struggled and suffered and hoped during the occupation. But when the new Government at last appeared, after a long behind-the-scenes wrangle, it was seen that while only five of the nineteen places were held by members of the exiled Government, four of them were key positions—Prime, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance. The resistance movements had only one official representative.

The new Government seemed to the impatient populace to act too slowly and too feebly. Because measures were not taken to force all food and coal available into the proper channels of distribution, the Black Market rapidly revived, and now flourishes almost as it did during the occupation. "Purification" of official services seemed too dilatory, and too many big industrial collaborators were left at liberty. After five months there has only been one major industrial trial.

Most serious was the failure to harness the great reserves of energy, patriotism and courage represented by the underground movement. After being continually praised and encouraged when things were bad, they now felt themselves unwanted. Instead of being grateful for this fine instrument in its hands, the Government showed itself afraid of it and anxious only about how it could be disarmed and broken up. Not only the underground movement, but the people generally were restless and unhappy. But they had no agreed alternative programme, and most of them had no programme at all. The Communists, the most energetic section in the underground, had a programme, and inevitably they took the lead when dissatisfaction reached its peak at the end of November.

But the shootings in the Rue de la Loie and the appearance of British tanks in the streets of Brussels a few days later were a tremendous shock to the people. The Communists and underground leaders associated with them badly overplayed their hands. The Belgians did not want street clashes. Least of all did a people, whose friendship for and gratitude to Britain often make me blush, want to be involved in any clash with our armed forces.

The crisis left the Government much stronger than it had been, and the Communists much weaker. The resistance movement was split between those who were prepared to follow the Communists the whole way and those who tended more and more to withdraw themselves from the arena. But nothing was solved.

The Government has been mildly progressive. Its two principal measures were M. Van Acker's social insurance scheme, which has some resemblances to our Beveridge plan, but was brought into immediate operation, and M. Gutt's Bill for the taxation of occupation profits which aroused the bitter antagonism of the industrialists and the right wing generally. In fact the complaint against the Government is not so much against its policy and programme as against its lack of initiative and inspiration.

In Holland the position has been more obscure because only the southern part of the country is freed. Food and fuel have been even more scarce, there is little black market and suffering has been great. And here too those who have endured the occupation feel themselves completely out of sympathy with those who spent the war years in London. The officers who have held administrative appointments under the Dutch military mission have frequently aroused criticism and hostility.

When Dr. Gerbrandy and some of his Ministers visited Holland in December, the Premier showed some understanding of the attitude of the people. He promised his Government would resign as soon as the whole country was liberated and gave an assurance that the man chosen to form a new Government would be someone who had been in Holland during the occupation. This pleased the Resistance but anxiety was still felt by some experienced progressive leaders. Social Democrats in particular feel uneasy about the possibility of a parliament nominated under a scheme drawn up by a Government so largely representative of big business as is the Dutch Government in London.

In Belgium the progressive forces are split, politically, among the Christian Democrats—the left wing of the Catholic Party—the progressive Liberals, the Socialists and the Communists, and industrially among the Christian Democrat and Socialist trade unions and the new unions formed during the occupation—the Communist-influenced C.L.S. and the independent metal workers' unions of Charleroi and Liége. In Holland there are the Catholic, Protestant and Social Democratic unions and some new Communist-influenced unions in the Limburg mining areas.

In both countries the main impulses towards re-alignment come from the progressive Catholics on the one hand and the Communists on the other, but while the Communists work for as wide a progressive unity as can be achieved, the progressive Catholics are unwilling to associate with the Communists politically in either country and in Belgium not even industrially.

The energy and increased strength of the Communists has been frequently noted, but in both Belgium and southern Holland the energy and increased strength of the progressive Catholics is scarcely less significant. In both countries they are working for a new alignment which would have three main parties—a Conservative party, a progressive party which would include themselves, the bulk of the Socialist party and the progressive Protestants or Liberals, and the Communist Party with the extreme left wing of the Socialist Party.

These Catholics consider themselves socialist but not Marxist. In Holland they talk about a corporate but democratic organisation of industry, which must be compelled to put the interests of the community first. In Belgium they say that the coal, transport, electricity, insurance, arms and aircraft, sugar and flour milling industries should all be "put at the disposal of the community." They say that while the bishops are inclined to disapprove, many of the younger priests sympathise with them and they do not anticipate active opposition by the Church to association with the Socialists.

So far neither progressive Catholics nor Communists have achieved much, partly because of the lack of enthusiasm of the Socialists, and in Holland because anything concrete must await full liberation. There has, however, been some progress on the industrial side. In Belgium talks have taken place between the Socialist and new trade unions and agreement has been reached which is expected to result in fusion in the next month or two. The Christian trade unions declined to take part in those talks. In Holland Catholic, Protestant and Social Democratic trade unions have for the first time been linked together by joint committees.

Politically, there have only been inconclusive conversations. Many of the leaders of the Belgian Socialist party are said to favour the formation of a new party with the Christian Democrats and the Progressive Liberals, but the left wing of the party turns rather towards the Communists and the possibility of splitting the party is a retarding influence. Moreover, the Flemish Christian Democrats are much less anxious for a new alignment than are the Walloons. In Holland Social Democrats have held conversations with both Communists and Progressive Catholics, but naturally no decisions can be reached there. Whether anything will come of these movements it is hard to say. There is a general feeling that the clerical basis of political division is out of date, but the tradition is old and very strong. It may be that there will be no fundamental change until after general elections have shown the extent to which the attitude of the peoples has changed during the grim years of occupation and the disappointing months of liberation.

OUR CHILDREN

In such a home for children of three years, not one of the children could talk. The matron said: "They do not need to talk, everything is done for them." "Whose Children?" by Lady Allen of Hurtwood.

If they could speak, if we could hear
  The inmates of the orphanage,
The infants left to us to rear,
  State step-children of tender age,
They would describe how much is done
For children who belong to none.

If they could speak they might compare
  The Guardians with the Magistrates,
And how Home Office orphans fare,
  And how those charged upon the rates—
But Bumble sees no need to teach
These pauper waifs their native speech.

If they could reason, they would learn
  That for the wealth the State expends,
The Treasury gets no return,
  Society no dividends.
The system they would not condemn,
When everything is done for them.

They would discover they possess
  No fundamental human right
To wellbeing, health and happiness,
  To playtime, schooling, sun and light.
Expenses must not be increased
For children of the poor, deceased.

The infant concentration camp
  Is all the Treasury affords,
Which leaves an everlasting stamp
  On National and Council wards.
Once sentenced to protective care,
They live and breathe a prison air.

Must England rear these children so?
  And are not children England's need?
And must these State step-children grow
  A wretched, warped, Satanic breed?
Satanic youth! the judges say—
Who are Satanic, we or they?

SAGITTARIUS

A LONDON DIARY

WHAT first impressed me about the opening session of the World Trade Union Conference was the tranquil atmosphere. Delegates who had been on opposite sides of the fence in pre-war days now seemed ready to make a real attempt to reach an understanding. On Wednesday a crisis came with Citrine's challenging speech. In view of the strength of the Soviet and C.I.O. delegations and the support given them from the French and some of the newer trade union groups, there seems a danger of British isolation. At international conferences like this it always seems miraculous if anything gets decided. Superficially all is confusion, groups talking in different parts of the hall, cameramen climbing about, translators shouting in different languages. I felt very sympathetic with one delegate who was trying to learn by heart some English phrases. When I saw him he was anxiously repeating to himself "Please which is the way-in?—please which is the way-out?" Quite a neat summary of the questions the Conference is here to discuss.

* * *

Nauseating cases of cruelty to children have shocked everyone during the last week. In one instance the penalty seemed incredibly inadequate. A correspondent very naturally wants to know why a man or woman can be sent to prison for a considerable period for a small theft, and only fined £20 for revolting cruelty to children. The whole question of the chance given to children who for one reason or another come under the protection of the public authorities is now, I hope, to be investigated. Lady Allen did good service recently in raising the topic in *The Times*, and she has now published a pamphlet called *Whose Children?* (by post, 1s. 2d., Simpkin Marshall, Ltd., 12, Old Bailey, E.C.4). Her indictment leaves two strong impressions on the mind. The first is one of administrative chaos; rival sets of authorities run a mixture of institutions, some of which are good and some bad. The second is that some of the institutions which seem good may really be the most inhuman. Too often the main object of the institution is "tidiness." If the children have their noses clean and do not make a noise, it is assumed that the inspector will be satisfied. "Sagittarius" writes this week on the subject of a home, mentioned by Lady Allen, where none of the children of three could talk. G.B.S. was right when he said in his letter to *The Times*: "All children should be tirelessly noisy, playful, grubby-handed except at meal times, soiling and tearing such clothes as they need wear, bringing not only the joy of childhood into the house but dust and mud as well." But the accuracy of Lady Allen's indictment must be tested. I fancy some of her quotations refer to past conditions.

* * *

"Somehow," writes a friend now working in France, "I think the mood of Paris and of the Anglo-American organisations there very important, symbolic, if you like, of the whole war. Paris hivers; outside exquisitely beautiful in the snow—and gay since adult Parisians snowball each other (and us!) in the Champs Elysées. I have seen young women almost wallowing in the snow. And all because the Germans forbade snowballing! But there is the other side. The cold inside the unheated houses, the *greyness* of soul, the sense of starved greatness. Even the rich are pitiable. X, with francs bought at 860 to the pound in Switzerland, took me to a famous restaurant. Our feet froze, and the screens at the door seemed there to keep out the warmth of the street. There were the rich eating macaroni and beetroot salad and washing it down with lovely wine at £2 10s. a head.

"Meanwhile the army with steam-heated messes and offices—endless food, free cinemas and theatres, cigarettes and whisky, living its comfortable, highly social life, whirling from office to mess and from mess to mess in high-powered cars. And in Anglo-American offices, a quiet, easy routine of papers passing and repassing, of conferences and lunches and cocktail parties (which we only go to for business contacts, of course), of British and Americans, male and female, existing *on* the war *in* starving France. Of course the Allies are planning. Planning—and planning. With plenty of mild jokes we are planning the occupation of Germany and destruction of Nazism. We plan all the equipment, from trucks to typewriters; we plan everything except the positive things we have to do to create a non-Nazi Germany. We plan to be *tough*, to stop everything, to prevent everything, to regulate and control everything—with a staff of thousands of uninterested, uneducated, relatively decent non-German speaking officers. Everyone here knows the plans are phoney, and that the toughness is synthetic. What does toughness mean unless as a means to a purpose?"

* * *

All through the war, Common Wealth and other candidates who have broken the political truce at by-elections have had much to say about the out-of-date voting register. They found many of those who supported them enthusiastically were disfranchised because they had been too young to be on the list before the war or had only recently moved into the constituency. Honor Balfour, for instance, would almost certainly have got the few additional votes she required to win Darwen if the under twenty-fives had been able to have their say. Now, in the five contests that are due in the next weeks, the new register applies for the first time. If I were a party organiser I should be keeping a pretty close eye on the way the younger people vote. This is likely to be more interesting than the actual results. Neither the Trotskyist at Neath nor the Nationalists who are said to be putting up at Motherwell and Carnarvon are likely to win. The only opposition candidate whose chances I should be inclined to rate high is Wing-Commander Millington, who is being put up by Common Wealth in Chelmsford. He seems to be just the sort of youthful Service candidate the Labour Movement is looking for in order to meet the challenge of a host of Tory D.F.C.'s at the General Election. Millington, who is still under thirty, was first a soldier and then a bomber pilot. Before the war, he was a prominent member of the Labour League of Youth and, what I think is an important qualification, he grew up in the district he now seeks to represent. If he is elected, he says he will not contest the constituency at the General Election if a selection conference of progressive organisations should decide on another candidate who would command unanimous support. This seems most sensible to me: all the more pity that a three-cornered fight is probable at Chelmsford.

* * *

One boon has been vouchsafed us by the gales and rain of six war winters: the advertisers' hoardings and placards which made the face of pre-war England hideous to the eyes of walker, motorist and railway passenger have mostly been blown down. I was glad to note the unanimity with which the House of Lords last week deplored the idea that they might be resurrected; but I do not share Lord Woolton's view that the need for fresh legislation may be obviated by a self-denying ordinance adopted voluntarily by advertising practitioners. The Act of 1925 gave local authorities powers to restrict unsightly advertisements by by-law; but the powers have been hesitatingly applied, and local councillors sometimes have odd notions of aesthetics. Outdoor advertising in cities is not the urgent problem. Some people like streets illuminated by neon signs, and, so long as the advertiser is not allowed to lay his hands on the dome of St. Paul's or to add to the dangers of night-driving on suburban by-passes by dazzling the motorist's vision, perhaps no great harm is done. But in the country I can see no case whatever for the outdoor display of advertisements. Why should a lovely village be defaced by proclamations of the rival merits of branded petrols, teas or tobaccoes? And, as for the hoardings along roads and railways, they are, I should have thought, bad business from the advertiser's standpoint. Instead of persuading, they irritate and repel.

* * *

I am glad to see that some radio critics have spoken their minds about the long and boring broadcast called *The King's Tryall*. I never came across a more convincing example of the artist's contention that truth is not to be found in precise representation. To report almost verbatim one of the most dramatic events in English history without any effort to explain its significance, the events that had led up to it or the issues at stake was a curious piece of unimaginative pedantry. Over and over again we heard the King explain that the court could have no jurisdiction over a sovereign, and we heard the court override this plea. From this piece of legalism (which has no meaning in our day when we all think of kings as subject to the law like other men), some extra sympathy may have been built up perhaps for Charles, but no glimmer of light was thrown on the real issues which went deep into the roots of our society and vitally affected the whole development of Europe. Historical broadcasts need a dramatic technique just as much as historical dramas on the stage.

* * *

The hard winter seems to have done less harm than the similar spell in the winter of 1939–40. According to my once-a-week gardener (still Mr. Park, of course) it was because of a ferociously cold wind that my rosemary was shrivelled up five years ago, whereas now it is flourishing. No doubt that also explains why a cistus (which I was told could not survive a breath of frost) looks particularly healthy! One always forgets how finely things go on growing under a warm blanket of snow. This week the winter aconites are a miser's pile of gold; the snowdrops are still small but dazzling white, primroses are coming out in sheltered spots, and two clumps of polyanthus, one purple and the other flame, are pretending that the week-end sunshine was the beginning of spring. CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to N. Baron.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

At Manchester City Magistrates' Court yesterday, Albert Wadham was charged with stealing a Manchester Corporation bus, value £1,100. . . . Detective A. Macpherson said that late the previous night he met Wadham and told him he was believed to have stolen the bus. Wadham, the officer alleged, replied, "Yes, that's right. I want to get everything straight. I was going to 'flog' it on the black market in London, but I could not get a garage to put it in."—Report in *Manchester Guardian*.

Piano, suit. only for piece of furniture, very cheap. —Advert. in Wolverhampton *Express and Star*.

Tinned salmon is to have new labels. In the past the various species of salmon were graded one, two, and three.

Because the Ministry of Food thought that this form of grading misled the public into thinking that these are three different qualities of fish, the three species will now be known as group one, group two, and group three.—Report in *News of the World*.

Dress suit, tails, excellent condition apart from 9 moth holes, well tailored.—Advt. in *Bucks Free Press*.

TOWARDS COMMUNITY

THE idea of Community—sharing in common—is being canvassed to-day by people with widely divergent philosophies of life and, consequently greatly differing definitions of what is meant by community. The necessity for some form of communal living is urged by those who see in the voluntary purposive integration of small groups the only effective challenge to totalitarianism. It is urged as a social, and sometimes as an economic, necessity for large heterogeneous groups by those who fear not totalitarianism, but disorder and chaos—which in the realm of Housing and Town Planning certainly threatened us before the war.

In practice, the trend towards community has been given a strong impetus by the war. Whether its enforced community life will produce a violent reaction in favour of privacy, individualism and quiet family life, is much debated. Meanwhile, our planners, with opportunities such as their predecessors in the last generation could only dream of, plan geographical communities. The familiar and discredited method of segregating groups of the urban population strictly according to income level and spending power—four houses to the acre, eight, twelve to the acre, upwards of forty flats to the acre, seventy to a hundred or more lettings to a slum acre—is discarded, on paper. Various types and sizes of architecturally harmonised dwellings enclose junior, infant and nursery schools and playing fields, with groups of shops and public houses at convenient intervals, clinics, hospitals, senior schools and churches spaciously set out, factories and warehouses conveniently sited in the background, a central market and finally a glorious open square, flanked by and culminating in the Civic Centre—the seat of local government, of drama, art, and culture, of adult education and communal recreation. This scheme has a popular appeal and has found general acceptance. It is favoured, for instance, by many Conservatives who want to see the private ownership of small houses, and by Communists who set before the workers a dazzling spectacle of life in modern multi-storey flats.

In detail, ideas of what a community centre should be vary widely. Youth Club members and leaders who have carried on in borrowed buildings, in dreary, stuffy basements or cold, draughty old houses, demand accommodation specially designed for their needs; some civic committees which are furthering schemes for community centres think in terms of buildings which will house the district headquarters of statutory and voluntary social services, or which will have some of the features of residential settlements. Suggestions for libraries, swimming-pools, and gymnasia feature in most schemes, an assembly hall-cum-theatre in all. At this stage in our deliberations the Ministry of Education is to be congratulated on the publication of a helpful statement* "for official use." "H.M. Government," says the prefatory note, "has decided that the provision of Community Centres to promote the social and physical training and recreation of the community should be regarded as coming within the scope of the education service administered by local education authorities . . ." and chapter one contains the important statement that "education" is used not only in its classroom connotation, but "in the sense of putting people in the way of making their own entertainment and bringing out their latent abilities for the better use of life outside working hours." The need has apparently been brought home to His Majesty's Government in connection with the uses of leisure—made available by the mechanisation of industry and a progressive reduction of working hours. The authors of the report note "two startling facts": the acute shortage of premises where people can meet together, and the acute shortage of funds for community activities, or, as the report puts it, "the difficulty experienced in making the existing centres self-supporting"—an understatement calculated to bring a wry smile to the faces of a few thousand pioneers in community centre work.

The report deals fairly and undogmatically with many practical questions involved in Community Centres, but it leaves other urgent problems untouched. For instance—and this problem is touched on but no more—is a community centre primarily for adults with a Youth section by courtesy, or should there not also be room for the under fourteens and for family membership which was a successful feature of the Pioneer Health Centre on its community side? What is the real purpose of the clubs which will use the centre? Recently the head of a famous religious settlement said that a Youth Club should be somewhere to meet your friends and have a drink, and the head of an evening institute said that all successful social clubs needed a functional basis of people pursuing a common task. It is magnificent, and most necessary, to have a fine centre with educational, cultural, social, and recreational facilities available for all who wish to make use of them, but is the large centre enough? Is there not a very great need for a meeting room which serves smaller population groups and more intimate gatherings than can be catered for at the large community centre?

In one small estate in a crowded area in North London about two hundred families have been rehoused. A spacious estate office was built—a large room with a small kitchen, cloakroom, and plenty of cupboards. That room is used for such purposes as a women's club and debating society, a girls' club (run by the members), meetings of savings and garden committees, wedding and coming-of-age parties, Christmas and other festivities. It is, in fact, a little community centre, and a highly successful one. That is, it serves a community, a community already in existence and needing a rallying point. The report rightly stresses that the community should precede the centre, and that the centre should be built in sections, with adaptations of the original plans if necessary. But it deals throughout with one central building to serve a district, and regretfully, with the makeshifts of shared buildings, with the use of schools and county college premises for clubs. Would it not be better to start from the idea of a room where existing clubs, committees and discussion groups could meet, and work towards the large central building which would serve for activities which could not be housed in a room?

The publication of the Report and the work of our planners give rise to more fundamental speculations. It seems that we accept the implied sharp cleavage between work and leisure as inevitable for the large majority of the community. The argument is that "work in a machine age is repetitive, dull and lifeless in the extreme. It will become more deadly as mechanisation advances. But the hours spent in work will lessen. There is an obvious danger in relying on mechanised and standardised entertainment for the hours not spent in gainful employment. Therefore we must have the modern community centre with an emphasis on self-development and creative recreation." Thus we abandon, for the vast majority of the population, any hope of work as vocation, whether the work be farming, furniture-making, trading or administration. It is difficult to see how to step outside this cycle—how to arrest the headlong dive for a "Brave New World." It would be a move in the right direction to work towards a time when industrial and other workers engaged for a few hours a day, or week, in occupations requiring no dexterity or mental effort should, as a matter of course, spend half or more of their *working hours* in some interesting and skilled occupation. Such a conception is not romantic. It is more practical than the road down which we are allowing ourselves to be driven to-day.

IRENE T. BARCLAY

* COMMUNITY CENTRES. *H.M. Stationery Office*, 9d.

STRANGE PRISONERS

THE Intelligence Officer of the Canadian Prisoner of War camp frowned which he, as a born optimist, did only in very serious cases. Now he had specially sent for a Turkish language expert from Ottawa, who was supposed to know at least twenty Turkoman idioms, but the scientific opinion of the learned professor was contained in the few words: "I regret I do not know this language." His fee (including travelling expenses) was 350 dollars.

Opinions of similar curtness had so far been expressed by no fewer than ten lingual experts: The Turk, a Pole, a Russian, a Persian, an Arab and five gentlemen of other nationalities, representing a total expenditure of $4,000 or so. "My *dearest* prisoners, these two chaps," sighed the Intelligence Officer. Nevertheless the mystery of their origin remained unsolved, although the War Office requested a report with growing impatience. Really, even a born optimist had every reason to frown!

Slowly the Intelligence Officer crossed the yard. It was nearly supper-time and the men were standing about in groups. What a curious mixture was this last transport. Apart from Germans, there were Poles, Czechs, Russians, Caucasians and whatever other "volunteers" Hitler could scrape together. Over there in the corner, separate from the others, were the two latest world-enders. They gave the military salute, grinning at him as if he were an old friend.

For the last four months, i.e., since the arrival of this transport, he had watched them almost daily. Their language sounded sometimes like a soft cooing, sometimes like a throaty murmur. He could hardly distinguish one sound from the other, but the recurring gestures led him to believe that they were repeating always the same story. They had lost their paybook, and the uniform of the Russian "Volunteer Corps" did not always convey much either, since the Intelligence Officer had heard it rumoured that in immense Russia at least as many tongues are spoken as in all the rest of Europe.

The War Office wanted a report. Very nearly the eleventh professor would have been called to the camp—had it not been for a simple Sergeant-Major who accomplished what all the ten professors had been unable to do. During roll-call, the new Sergeant-Major had noticed two voices which broke the prescribed silence, interrupted only by numbers. The spokesman of the prisoners, a sturdy, typical German from Upper Silesia, regretfully shrugged his shoulders: "We cannot get any discipline into those two, they simply don't understand us." For a moment the Sergeant-Major listened in the direction of the careless voices. Then a miracle happened. His lips formed a few words (without the usual thunder) which sounded like throaty murmur or the soft cooing of a dove. At the same moment the two involuntary outsiders were silent and stood at attention until roll-call was over.

Less than twenty minutes later, the Intelligence Officer was offering cigarettes to the Sergeant-Major and the two prisoners. Once again he felt justified in being a born optimist. His by now habitual frown had been replaced by a smile of relief. Now the War Office would, after all, get the report and would be satisfied.

Before turning to the story of the two strangest prisoners of the British Empire, let us shortly explain the ability of the Sergeant-Major to understand the language which to the Intelligence Officer sounded like a throaty murmur or the soft cooing of a dove. When he was a young man—he did not tell us whether as soldier at a Nordic outpost, as agent or simply as an adventurer—

he had travelled through large parts of Asia including Tibet, where he stayed for some considerable time. He had shared the life of the natives and learned their language.

The story of the two Tibetans—yes, this was the solution of the riddle which defeated the combined well-paid efforts of ten authoritative experts—did not take long to tell. After the fourth cigarette it was completed. It began in a village at the Tibet border. For ten months, two poor farm workers had been unable to find work. Not knowing the word "economic crisis" they nevertheless felt its repercussions. In the shelter of their numerous and never grumbling family, they continued to receive their plate of rice. After a while, however, the two became tired of this bread (or rather rice) of charity and decided, full of youthful enterprise—they had never read a book of adventures for the simple reason that they could not read or write—to go out into the world and make their future.

Unconcern is sometimes the best passport. Our two Tibetans knew little about frontiers, nationalities and other political ballast. Without meeting a guard on either side, they crossed over to Soviet Russia and cheerfully wandered on. Soon, however, they had nothing left to eat and were forced to apply for work at a number of Collectives, but no one understood their words or the accompanying gestures. Finally, the local Soviet Commissar was consulted. He was a man with common sense, and instead of calling in lingual experts from Moscow or Leningrad, he made them join without much ado a group of workers sent to the Ukraine. For days there was nothing but the railway track, sometimes hours of waiting for connections, and at last they reached their destination. This was the beginning of their long solitude. Nobody understood them, so they told each other their own story some dozen times every day. Up to the present moment. . . .

They were employed at road-making and worked as well as they could, despite the difficulty of making them understand what they had to do. Then suddenly the overall was changed into a uniform. There was a lot of shooting. After a few days the Tibetans found themselves in a long column of sad-looking comrades. They were led by men in different uniforms, carrying bayonets. Thus began the Nazi captivity of the two strangers who knew no more about the Germans than of the Russians.

They passed through various camps, were treated badly and worse fed and could not understand why they were so often pushed into a room with a desk and a telephone, where men, partly dressed in ordinary, partly in black uniform, addressed to them a flood of vehement and incomprehensible words. Sometimes they also received blows. But in the end one always let them go. Indeed, after they had both put a cross under a long document, these unpleasant experiences did not occur again. (Not only analphabetics sign German documents containing statements they never made.)

Following an indefinite period—estimated at about two years—they lived in a new and better camp where they even got decent food. They wore yet another uniform—that of the Russian Free Corps of "compulsory volunteers." Having been exempt from military training—probably no sergeant was willing to have his discipline spoiled by their comic inability to understand him—the Tibetans once more found themselves herded into long railway trains. At the station girls waved to them and even pinned flowers to their caps. On leaving the train they were quickly taken to the front. The situation was noisy and uncomfortable. There was even more shooting than before in the Ukraine.

Stripped of their weapons which they would not have been able to handle anyway, they marched once again in a column of prisoners. The men with the bayonets wore strange uniforms, and the food in the transit camp was better.

They liked the long journey on the boat as a welcome change after so much travelling by train. And now, well now, they were here.

The food was the best they had ever had, they both declared appreciatively. If only they were not again being pushed so often into a room with a desk and a telephone, where again they were bothered by different people with incomprehensible words. However, there had been no blows and for this reason they were very grateful to that gentleman—their glances are directed towards the Intelligence Officer, who acknowledges this compliment with a farewell cigarette—and saluted him whenever they saw him.

This day was a great event for the Tibetans. For the first time, they were able to tell their story not only to each other, but to a third person who understood it. Finally they inquired hesitantly whether *they* would now be permitted to ask a question. Permission being granted to them, all the repressed feelings of the two men who had left their native village in order to find a living and who had found nothing but the bloody and incomprehensible war, found expression in one simultaneous question: "Why is there so much shooting everywhere?"

ALFRED JOACHIM FISHER

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

PARTS of *A Midsummer-night's Dream*, recently added to the Haymarket Repertory, are charming, but as a whole it brought me only mild pleasure and aesthetic disappointment.

> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

I found myself asking. It is the old story: the production has not been directed by a sense of the nature of Elizabethan poetic drama. And without that even skilful individual acting avails little. The performance is only yet another attempt to make a play out of hopeless material; trusting that pretty dresses, pretty scenery, whiffs of exquisite poetry (much is of course lost in transmission; often I could not follow what Puck said), animated gestures and buffoonery too forced to be funny, will somehow combine to produce an effect worthy of Shakespeare and able to rival that made by the script itself upon the imaginations of readers.

A Midsummer-night's Dream belongs to that group of early Shakespearean plays, sometimes described as the lyrical group, which includes also *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*. These four plays were written during the years 1594 to 1596 inclusively, but their order is largely a matter of conjecture. There are two small internal indications, however, that the Dream was probably first composed somewhere not far off the end of 1594. Titania's long beautiful speech (Miss Peggy Ashcroft's voice was silvery and mild), which describes the dire effects of the quarrel between herself and Oberon, is clearly reminiscent of the terrible weather of that year which chroniclers tell us produced a shortage of corn. Again, the joke about the ladies being afeared of the lion may well have been prompted by an incident connected with the christening feast of the Scottish Prince Henry in August of that year. It was at first proposed to exhibit a lion on that occasion, but the project was abandoned for that very reason. Now such allusions would only be effective if they were fairly fresh in people's memories. And this is a reason for putting *A Midsummer-night's Dream* before *Romeo and Juliet*. On the other hand, if you see in Pyramus and Thisbe a parody of the latter play, naturally you will not. However, let that remain uncertain. What is clear is (1) that the poet's imagination about this time often dwelt on fairies: recall Mercutio's speech; (2) that in this group of plays though Shakespeare's poetic genius is flowering perfectly, his dramatic genius has by no means reached its zenith; (3) that *A Midsummer-night's Dream* has marks of being special work intended to honour a noble nuptial occasion. "A division into Acts has been superimposed upon a text written for continuous performance." In short, though fitted to its occasion, it is a poor specimen of Shakespeare's theatrical art. It was originally a sort of gracious, poetic charade, full of dancing, fun and songs (two of these are lost), and leaving even more than the Elizabethan theatre usually did to the imagination of spectators. This is what the modern producer must take into account

On September 29th, 1662, Pepys wrote in his diary ". . . and then to the King's Theatre where we saw *The Midsummer-night's Dream*; which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again; for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that I ever saw in my life. I saw, I confess, some good dancing and some handsome women, which was all my pleasure." Poetic fantasias were already as beyond comprehension as they are to-day. Evidently, at the King's Theatre in 1662 the actors had tried, as in a modern theatre, to dramatise naturalistically this entirely formal kind of entertainment, and to make it as convincing as possible. If we were honest we would arrive at Pepys's conclusion about the result, because the attempt is hopeless. This dream, like all dreams, confounds time and place. We are in ancient Athens and Warwickshire, and among yokels, Greek heroes, Elizabethan courtiers, and fairies. The reader finds no difficulty in this, and thanks to the word-music and speech-imagery he is enraptured. But the spectator in a theatre is not, unless he is helped by what is before his eyes being entirely symbolic, though it can be beautiful too, and all the acting being formal rather than emotional—as the acting of a dancer is formal, with moments of eloquent stillness. Then he can bend all his attention upon the words. Otherwise, the dream becomes a mere pantomime, and Shakespeare's dream can be something better—strange to us but better.

Granville Barker, when he produced *A Midsummer-night's Dream* at the Savoy in 1914, came nearest to avoiding pantomime. He thought the fairies the producer's great difficulty. He made them metallic creatures like figures from a great gilt clock. This had the advantage at any rate of dehumanising them and making them plausibly invisible at moments when others on the stage are supposed not to see them. But Puck is a crux. He belongs to a less universal folk-lore than that of Bottom and Quince. He is "Robin Goodfellow" and he must be different. Puck at the Haymarket is too definitely faunish. I thought Oberon (Mr. Gielgud spoke his lines with musical impressive clarity) too like a sad wise human king (Oberon need not be sad at all), and Titania too humanly pathetic. They missed, too, the drama of their first encounter, when, each with a retinue of elves behind, they should face each other like angry quivering wasps.

Mr. Miles Malleson supplied a perfect piece of character-acting in a part where that is not out of place; his muddled, amiably apprehensive Quince is a genuine piece of comic creation. And Mr. Leslie Banks as Bottom achieved a massive and appropriate loutishness. But in comparison with Mr. Malleson's his performance lacked histrionic gusto. In playing Shakespeare's buffoons, Bottom, Dogberry, Osric, etc., the actor should transmit to the audience his own virtuoso's relish in impersonating so preposterously exaggerated a figure. This can lend a sort of lyric detachment to Shakespeare's fun, which otherwise is apt to be heavy. Mr. Leon Quartermaine's Theseus (the character is empty) had good points, but he did not deliver as he should have done his superb lines, "Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon," etc.; not with the conscious pride of a poet—"now I am going to say something wonderful, listen." Sometimes, it is true, Shakespeare's great poetry should be dropped as it were by accident, but at others it should be pronounced with a glorious ostentation, of which, say, Yeats in conversation was alone capable among contemporary poets. That shows the different place poetry occupied in the lives of Elizabethans. They gloried in words: they went to the theatre to hear them; they allowed themselves to be excited by them, and their men of action, when taking risks, instead of speaking about catching the bus, declared that "the arrows of opportunity are plumed with feathers from the wings of death." That is what the producer of the Dream must hold on to. It is an entertainment of exquisite recitations, mixed with dance and knockabout fun.

DESMOND MACCARTHY

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RADIO NOTES

THERE is more than one way of not getting the best out of the B.B.C.'s programmes, but the royal road to failure is that of *desultory* listening. He (the desultory listener is usually a man) switches on the wireless in an odd moment, hears something which does not interest (and probably was not intended for) him, turns it angrily off, and then complains at large—if possible in the House of Commons—that the B.B.C.'s programmes are inveterately rotten. It never seems to occur to these good people (and they are legion) that this is an unfair way of judging a 17-hour miscellany designed to satisfy the tastes and interests of every age, class, profession, and educational level in the community—not to mention the exigencies of different working days. In principle, of course, it should be possible for us, whoever we are, to hear the kind of thing we like at any hour of the day; but this would involve at least three, if not more, simultaneous programmes throughout the 17 hours. Let us hope that, one way or another, we shall eventually get this. Meanwhile, you cannot "plan" for the desultory or capricious listener: anyone who really wants not to miss the broadcasts that are intended for him must take the trouble (not after all very great) of looking through the week's programmes in advance and taking note of those which his other engagements will enable him to hear. This advice may seem elementary, but I have often been astonished by the number of people who evidently do not avail themselves of it.

At the same time I shall not pretend that I think the programme planning perfect: far too much time is devoted to broadcasting the same kind of thing—usually tea-time music or some sort of variety—on both the Home Service and the G.F.P. simultaneously, so that the more discriminating listener is driven into enemy territory. For instance, after the 9 o'clock news on Sunday evening, when many listeners would like either classical music or a serious play, they are obliged to choose between Religion, Albert Sandler, and a musical pot-pourri entitled "Sunday Rhapsody," which is not easy to enjoy. The quality of the performances is often high; but I must suggest that of all forms of broadcasting the musical hotch-potch, loosely held together by a cosy chat, is the lowest and should be altogether avoided.

I want to draw attention to "This is the Law," a 30-minute feature which is now running at 6.30 on Sundays. The object of this series, which is written and produced by Jenifer Wayne, is to present, in dramatic form, typical points of law which may affect any of us in our daily lives, and especially to help those who may be putting up with hardship or injustice through ignorance that they are in a position to claim the protection of the law. This is the kind of task which the radio feature is eminently fitted to carry out, and the first two programmes of this series, on *Landlord and Tenant* and *Blackmail*, were at once instructive and exciting. Miss Wayne is a producer who is never at a loss for ideas, and though I sometimes feel that in practice her zeal outruns her discretion (the opening sequence of *Landlord and Tenant* was rather embarrassing), these latest productions of hers are remarkable for technical smoothness, ingenuity and competence. On one point, however, I should like to join issue with her. Is it not a mistake, when your standard is Justice, to load the dice against one party by making them personally odious? In the instance imagined by Miss Wayne it was clearly right that the magistrate should decide in favour of the tenant, on grounds of "special hardship"; but why must the landlord (and incidentally his wife) be represented as *necessarily* hard-hearted and grasping? Surely it would have been fairer to assume that, while the fact that Mrs. Brown was just going to have a baby made it unfair to turn the Browns out of the house, Mr. and Mrs. Higgins may have been equally estimable people with *bona fide* reasons for wishing to regain their home. If these programmes, which are admirably acted (James McKechnie is a most persuasive narrator), fail to be completely impartial, they will miss their mark.

I must apologise for suggesting, last week, that the editor of Music Magazine was Alec Robertson. It appears that he is only a frequent contributor; the editors are Anna Instone and Julian Herbage.

RECOMMENDATIONS:—Feb. 12th.—Schubert's Octet, introduced by Compton Mackenzie.

Feb. 14th.—*Wesley in Cornwall.*

Feb. 16th.—Children's Concert, performed by soloists who have won laurels in the Children's Hour.

Feb. 23rd.—*The Odyssey of Runyon Jones.* Norman Corwin adapted to the English scene. David O'Brien in chief part.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

THE MOVIES

"The Woman in the Window," at the Odeon.
"Together Again," at the Tivoli

The great gangsters of the screen are lost to us one by one. Mr. Tracy sports a halo that can be seen a mile off; when Mr. Bogart rolls his shirt-sleeves and bares his teeth, he is only indulging in a bit of love-play; and Mr. Edward G. Robinson's Little Cæsar has been stabbed many times—but not, let us hope, fatally—by his Brutus. It is a very honourable and endearing little man who in *The Woman in the Window* commits manslaughter. He begins the day (that brow was bound to tell) lecturing to his students on Freud; sees wife and children off at the station; strolls to the club and before the window of the gallery next door halts to admire a portrait (that brow again!); before the night is out he has met the original and stabbed her lover to death with a pair of scissors. What was self-defence can look only like murder. Then begins the gruelling trend of events in which the body is dumped in the woods, inevitable clues are left, and the worried little professor has to listen to his friend, the district attorney, expounding the police view of the case. How natural, before the body has been discovered, that he should remark, "But I don't see why this murder . . ." to be pulled up with "Murder? I have said nothing about murder. This is only a case of disappearance, so far." The accumulation of tiny slips creates a suspense artfully sustained by the camera; every vista is factual and yet hints at uneasiness. Irony reaches a high level when Mr. Robinson visits the spot where the body was found and, while the police discuss footprints, makes a new set of them under their noses. A blackmailer who has discovered his secret adds a jolt to one's fears. I won't go on, except to add that every new happening or discovery is beautifully timed and as plausible as one could wish. Fritz Lang has done a stylish piece of direction which I enjoyed so much that I forgive the unforgivable trick ending. Did he show more imagination in the days when he disturbed us with *M*? No doubt; but I don't complain. If a dozen Hollywood films in a year were as accomplished as this one, the level of our entertainment would be raised considerably. Art and Mammon, it seems to me, have been very prettily served in *The Woman in the Window*. Besides Mr. Robinson's worried innocence, there are first-rate performances from Joan Bennett as the woman of the painting, Raymond Massey as the investigator, and Dan Duryea as the blackmailer.

Together Again—insipid title!—is an agreeably sentimental farce with Irene Dunne as Mayor of a small town and Charles Boyer as an intruding sculptor. Last time I saw Mr. Boyer he was a composer; it goes with the accent, I suppose. There is a vein of whimsy that threatens now and then to spoil this film, but each time it gets funnier instead. Charming liveliness from Miss Dunne and from Charles Coborn, both of them dears.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Infernal Machine," at the Chanticleer

Jean Cocteau's fascinating play at the Chanticleer Theatre, renews finely the story of Oedipus. The machine, he tells us, is destiny, designed by the infernal gods for the mathematical destruction of a mortal. The play is part *Hamlet*, part Freud, and part *Golden Bough*; only the last act deals with the period covered by Sophocles. The production was always adequate, Peter Brooks is an intelligent and tactful young man who obviously has his whole heart in it. The play was put over with the passionate intensity of youth and yet with none of its sometimes embarrassing gaucherie. Gigrid Landstad's Jocasta and Frederick Horrey's Oedipus were both good. War-time restrictions were evident in the costumes.

SOVIET GRAPHIC ART

EMINENT in poetry, fiction, music, the drama and the dance, Russia has not produced a painter of even the third order since the last of the great ikon-painters. Indeed the nineteenth-century Russian paintings at Leningrad surpass in badness anything I have seen elsewhere. In the absence of any honourable tradition one cannot expect the Soviet water-colours, drawings and engravings, etc, now at Burlington House to show any great assurance. And in fact the interest of the exhibition is sociological rather than æsthetic. Let me hasten to explain that I am not deprecating any absence of refinement. These exhibits are not violent or crude or aggressively emotional. They are superlatively mild—hardly distinguishable for the most part from the least spirited works in our War Artists' Exhibitions. Last week I was attributing a certain lack of animation in English art to our national character; and here are the Russians, whose magnificent vigour has amazed the world, expressing themselves in a manner far less animated! Indeed many of their artists draw very like the English ladies who haunted the "old world" cities of Italy at the beginning of this century.

Professor Sidorov in his foreword to the catalogue explains that Soviet Graphic Art is "distinguished by a severe simplicity, restraint and austerity." The artists, he adds, are "aware of the peculiarities of their own course. It is not always easy for them to follow that course. The paths of truth are always thorny and hard." Are we then to conclude that the imperative theory of "social realism" is responsible for the lack of vitality in this exhibition? That the artists have sacrificed their powers of self-expression to patriotic duty, to missionary zeal, or to the requirements of civil servants? I think not. Evidently the demand that art should be immediately within the grasp of the simplest intelligence grievously handicaps the painter, and would exclude the masterpieces of Giorgione and Rembrandt as well as of Cézanne. It is not only the subjects that "social realism" dictates; far more destructively, it also seems to call for a style that approximates to the photographic. And indeed most of the drawings in this exhibition would be advantageously replaced by good photographs. In spite of such obstacles I believe that if there were any artists of the first or second order in the U.S.S.R. they would make their powers felt. For realism is within the scope of most good painters. The effect of the exhibition therefore is to confirm my belief in the importance of congenital genius. Those who believe rather in the importance of environment would expect from the U.S.S.R. an art remarkably unlike our own. And what in fact we get is an art like that of our most Academic and genteel practitioners, an art that, coming from anywhere else would be labelled dismally bourgeois. It may be of course that there are good artists in the U.S.S.R. who are discouraged or disapproved. I think it more likely that the Russians just have no talent for painting.

Vereisky, a man of fifty-eight, stands out as a good straightforward portraitist; and in the general humdrum the sketches of Soifertis look comparatively alive. But the most pleasing exhibits are book illustrations, and particularly the coloured lithographs of Charustian, which are charming and fanciful. Otherwise the visitor must be advised not to bother about art, but to concentrate upon the magnificent war-effort, the sufferings and the destructions, here painstakingly recorded. One is happy to know what those Moscow salutes look like, and nobody can examine the exhibits without an increased understanding of what the war has cost the U.S.S.R. in sweat and blood and tears.

ROGER MARVELL

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Correspondence

THE LITTLE CLIQUE

SIR,—I have to thank you for the consideration you have kindly bestowed on my speech in the House of Commons on January 18th, and the courteous tone of your criticism of it.

It seems to me, however, that you burke the whole issue. You devote the whole of your letter to Greece, and then ask (forgive me for suggesting a trifle naïvely) if *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Herald*, *News Chronicle*, *Reynolds*, *New Statesman*, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all are in substantial agreement on that issue, where is the little clique to be found.

The fact is you seriously misrepresent what I said. I said: "Over four years of Coalition Administration there have been perhaps half a dozen (or a dozen) Votes of Confidence. The personnel of the Opposition Lobby has changed, but there has been throughout a little hard core representing the same little clique. Throughout the period the purposes of the majority of the Labour Party and of this little clique have been divergent. One has sought to overthrow the Government; the other to support it."

I went on to show how the same group of people, using the same technique apparently quite cynically, had exploited the Tobruk Debate, the cry for a second front now, the dissatisfaction over the Darlan and Badoglio affairs, the release of Mosley, and other episodes, merely for the purpose of whipping up sufficient popular feeling to overthrow the Government. In other words, I was not concerned with the attitude of *The Times* over Greece, any more than with that of Sir John Wardlaw Milne over Tobruk. I was concerned with the content of the Opposition Lobby over four years, its motive and organisation.

To put it plainly, I was not talking about those who over Greece were fooled some of the time; I was concerned with the dupes who have been fooled every time during this war, and with those who have done the fooling, and I have no reason to regret my description of them as "three little cliques, the professional agitator, the near Communist, and the mere intellectual" (*vide* Hansard, col. 454).

House of Commons. QUINTIN HOGG

[Mr. Hogg rides off the Greek issue by pretending that all critics of the government during the war have been cynically exploiting every possible occasion on which to seek its overthrow. This nonsense is not elucidated by the inclusion of Sir John Wardlaw Milne in the three "little cliques" of professional agitators, near-Communists and mere intellectuals.—ED. *N.S. & N.*].

SERVICE VOTES

SIR,—It may well be no exaggeration to say that if the Representation of the People Bill is passed as it stands the Tories have won the forthcoming election. American reactionaries were sufficiently powerful to sabotage the Forces' electoral machinery at the Presidential elections so that only one in three of the 7,000,000 U.S. Servicemen cast their votes. There is a danger of a similar situation arising here.

Before the present Bill came before Parliament the objection to the registration system introduced in the Forces was that it was not automatic but placed the onus of registration upon the Serviceman, thus placing him at a disadvantage as compared with the civilian: and further that a proxy vote was an unnecessary innovation which could be avoided by balloting taking place in the field.

The Bill fails to meet adequately these objections and, in some respects, worsens the position. The overseas Serviceman is now going to be given the opportunity of obtaining a direct postal vote, but for most of the men overseas this can only be obtained by registering not once, but twice. First, he must have filled in a proxy voting form by March 15th. Then he must have made an application for a postal voting form some time between March 31st and four days before nomination day. Worse, there is no indication within the Bill that the postal vote form is to be obtained except by the writing of a personal application: no Service form has apparently been provided. If a Serviceman in the Burmese jungle has performed his task of form filling and application making, he is eventually going to receive election addresses 10in. × 7½in. from his home candidates, and, by reading these pieces of paper, can make his considered opinion as to how to cast his vote. The soldier who has, however, only filled in the proxy voting form receives nothing. It will be even inpossible for his proxy to advise him what parties and candidates are standing in his constituency, for nomination day is to remain, as heretofore, nine days before polling day.

The public are being lulled by the tale that 90 per cent. of the servicemen will be registered by March 15th. It must clearly be understood that this is only a pious hope of the Service departments. All evidence coming from overseas would seem to indicate that the present figure is under 50 per cent.

Those of us who were in the Labour Party before we entered the Services, are confounded that Mr. George Shepherd and Arthur Woodburn, M.P., the Labour representatives at the conference that substantially determined the format of the Bill, should have been parties to the proposed electoral machinery. The address of the next of kin of every Serviceman is held in the records of all commands. No adequate explanation has been given as to why the Services cannot pass this information on to the Registrar-General and so ensure automatic registration of the serving man. AIRCRAFTSMAN

CHUNGKING POLITICS

SIR,—The Generalissimo's New Year message promised to convene a People's Congress this year in order to promulgate a Constitution. This is a great forward step and has been hailed with joy by every democrat. Yet, in addition to calling this stride a "small step," you, in your article "North China Front," seemed to throw suspicion on the good faith of the Generalissimo by saying "unless there is an important part of his speech unreported, he has not said when this body is to be set up, how it is to be constituted or what powers he intends it to possess."

Now, although people abroad often call the Generalissimo a dictator, it is not for him alone to decide these things. The Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintag makes these decisions. How the People's Congress is to be constituted and what powers it is to possess are matters that have been decided some years ago. The laws relating to such matters were promulgated by the National Government in May, 1936. In fact, the People's Congress was to have been convened in November, 1937, but the Japanese invasion prevented the general election. At first it was postponed indefinitely. Then, in 1943 the Central Executive Committee proclaimed that the People's Congress would be convened within one year after the conclusion of the war. Now the Generalissimo has anticipated this measure and has thereby hastened the process of China's democratisation.

Another point I should like to discuss is your observations upon the Democratic Federation. You said, "This group is a federation of the smaller parties, which exist with difficulty in China. They have at present no power and Chungking allows us to hear very little about them." It is true that they have at present no power, for their parties are very small, but I do not think it is quite true to say that they exist with difficulty. They are represented by ten to twenty members of the People's Political Council and two of their number sit on its presidium of seven. They are very active in and outside the Council, and they have their own publications which are there for everyone with eyes to see.

The blame for your having heard so little of them lies not at the door of the Government but rather, I am afraid, with the foreign correspondents at

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Chungking, scarcely one of whom speaks or reads Chinese. This reminds me of another statement made by foreign observers. They reported that at the last session of the People's Political Council criticism of the Government was heard for the first time. I have attended many sessions, and at every one of them I heard a great deal of criticism levelled against the Government. You heard nothing of it because the foreign correspondents had not sufficient interest of the language to attend the meetings. The only foreigners I ever saw in the visitors' benches were Mr. Owen Lattimore and some correspondents of the Tass News Agency.

My underlying purpose in writing this letter is not so much to refute some misleading or misinformed statements as to plead for more understanding. If we are to collaborate with each other to finish the war and to build the peace, we must try to learn more about each other, and sympathise more with the people and Government of the other ally.

CHEN YUAN,
Member of the People's Political Council.
Sino-British Cultural Association,
62, New Cavendish Street,
London, W.1.

[We shall indeed be glad if the Generalissimo's reference to a coming People's Conference proves as important a development of Chinese democracy as our correspondent suggests. It is still not clear to us how far Chiang Kai-shek's promise takes us beyond the hand-picked procedure of 1936, or how far the conference is to represent the whole of China. Details of the Generalissimo's speech, which were not available for our issue of January 13, were given by a correspondent in our issue of January 20th. As to the People's Political Council, it should be noticed that the Chungking censorship allows none but government-approved speeches to be printed, or fairly reported by the foreign press, so that reporters' ignorance of Chinese, lamentable though it is, makes on this issue little difference. It is true that selected members of these small Democratic parties serve on the People's Political Council, but that does not invalidate our statement that these parties exist with difficulty. Their leaders in the country have from time to time been arrested, and it is only in recent months (for the first time since 1942) that they have been able to publish a single newspaper in Yunnan; they still have no paper in Chungking. Last year, also for the first time, two independent political meetings were allowed in Chungking. We wrote with the object of welcoming these signs of growing democracy in China.—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

LABOUR AND DISARMAMENT

SIR,—Mr. Henderson is hard driven to find arguments to support his case.

Is the test now this: Should we as a nation have armed our children to meet the looming emergency, as the Fascist States did, with such disastrous social results?

Can I suggest to Mr. Henderson that it is logical to oppose the training of children of 14 in the use of lethal weapons, and yet to believe in armed preparedness of a people? War is a job for adults.

This issue has a very definite educational and social side, of which Mr. Henderson is apparently unaware. These considerations, however, may have been very powerfully present in the minds of those responsible for London's educational policy. EDUCATIONIST

POETRY AND EXAMINATION

SIR,—As a teacher of English, I entirely agree with your reviewer, Henry Reed, about the usefulness of C. Day Lewis's *Poetry for You*. But his remarks about the School Certificate examinations call for some comment. I do not wish to argue "the case for examinations," since that has already been very effectively done by Mr. Brereton. However, it is important that intelligent opinion should be clearly enlightened on this point, since there is a movement to abolish School Certificate for very unenlightened reasons. When Mr. Reed says that "the teaching of poetry is hampered in every way; not least by the restrictive syllabuses of the School Certificate year, during which education in any good sense of the word is usually suspended," I wonder if he realises that the syllabuses are in the long run made by the teachers. A school which does not like the given syllabus is at liberty to submit an alternative; I do not know how far this has been done, but I know from personal experience that set books can be changed as a result of correspondence with an examinations board. These boards are in general anxious to meet the wishes of the schools, but most of their progressive moves have to face a barrage of protest from less progressive teachers. Reform the teachers, then, and they will shortly reform the School Certificate. We are hampered in the teaching of poetry by nothing else so formidable as our own incapacity. J. M. REEVES

Quaves Road, Slough.

SHAKESPEARE COSTUMES

SIR,—In the Metropolitan Borough of Southwark we are endeavouring to make the annual Southwark Shakespeare Festival more worthy of the borough in which Shakespeare lived and wrote most of his plays. The schools of Southwark have agreed to dress various plays and walk in procession to the Cathedral, where a special festival celebration is to take place on either April 21st or 28th.

We are experiencing difficulty in obtaining costumes for the chief parts, and I am wondering if any readers who could help by lending costumes just for the day, would be good enough to send me a postcard giving details of the costumes they could supply.

I should be very happy to pay any transport costs, also to insure the costumes so that compensation would be paid for any loss or damage sustained. Any help offered will be gratefully appreciated.

Mayor of Southwark, LEONARD J. STYLES
The Town Hall, S.E.17.

WINGED HISTORY

SIR,—I have been reading, with interest and appreciation, an article in your number published on January 27th entitled "History Lesson." It is prefaced by a quotation from a recent adddress of mine, and it is evident that its author is under the impression that our views conflict. He will find, on the contrary, if he reads my address when it is printed—as I believe it is to be—that the whole purpose of the passage from which he quotes is to advocate the view expressed in his article, namely, that in teaching history to children it is essential to appeal to the imagination. I am so sure of this that I consider that the unimaginative child will get more good from studying another kind of subject, but the most essential words in the paragraph from which your contributor quotes are these: "If Pegasus has wings—and assuredly he has—let him be taught early to use them."

The University, A. S. TURBERVILLE
Leeds, 2.

DILAPIDATED HOUSES

SIR,—I am in control of a gang of men engaged on bomb repairs, at least what is supposed to be bomb damages.

This property is very old and bug-infested. The work we are doing is 98 per cent. dilapidations.

While I agree that the owner has to be given the benefit of any doubts as to extent of damage, the men and myself are concerned as to how much money from the national pocket is being spent on prolonging the life of filthy hovels such as we are working on.

Some of the properties are so bad that it is difficult to get men to do the work as directed, as they refuse to work in the putrid atmospheres and run the risk of carrying bugs. No repairs were carried out to these properties for a long period pre-war, being condemned, and now we are apparently to foot the bill. This is no isolated case. CHARGE HAND

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

For the first three decades of the nineteenth century the fabric of English social life, exposed to the hostile glare, first of Jacobinism, then of Napoleon, began to show its seams and the places where a century and more of unvarying habit had worn it thin. The aristocracy of England had good reason to fear Napoleon, but their terror of the French Revolution, as a potential source of "infection," was less well founded; for, whereas the French nobles, gelded and deprived of power, but not of possessions, by Richelieu, had accordingly become irresponsible and effete, their English equivalents continued to govern the country in fact as well as in principle. Englishmen of this class had, at this time, as much virtue and courage as they had ever possessed; but it is fear and misunderstanding, not courage, that clenches the fist, grips the knife or the whip, and poisons the fount of social confidence and good faith. English government throughout the eighteenth century unquestionably had its oppressive side; but Fielding, in *Jonathan Wild*, and Hogarth, in *Gin Lane*, could reveal abuses without indicting the whole society which begot them. This cannot be said of *Oliver Twist*. The emotional instability of the world reflected in that lurid masterpiece is revealed less by the picture of crime and poverty it contains than by a certain brutality of outlook which throws into violent chiaroscuro the opposition of the Gentle and the Unkind. It is when certain aspects of human nature can no longer be taken for granted that they are regarded with a veneration which appears sentimental to a period concerned with other disturbances of the emotional balance of power. What is sincere in one age becomes the hypocrisy of the next; and it was inevitable that, at the height of the reaction to Dickens, at the opposite end of the century, cool-minded persons, firmly established in the humanitarianism of a liberal age, should have found his appeal to Pity exaggerated, embarrassing and ridiculous. And as long as that tradition obtained, we continued to feel that. The truth, of course, is that at such moments Dickens was not addressing cool-minded Victorians to whom brutality was anathema, but a governing class in whom a growing terror of the new industrial proletariat had bred an indignant and ferocious resolution: men undismayed by the sordid tragedy of Peterloo, enraged by forces they themselves had unleashed, and not yet much reassured by Sir Robert Peel's recent invention, the Metropolitan Police Force. It was essential, if pity was to be aroused, to write in terms of the strongest pathos to people who noticed that their position was being called in question, in a country where, in London alone, one person in twenty was a criminal of some description.

Such a state of affairs puts a premium on Tenderness. Emotions, like retail goods, rise in price during times of national stress: the early nineteenth century could not—or thought it could not—afford easy forgiveness of trespasses; many people feel the same to-day. "For the heart must harden and a man's soul close in." Those who make it their business to open the hearts of men in the years immediately ahead of us will have to employ a method very close to that of Dickens in his early novels. It is a vulgar error to suppose that the naked report, the prim bluebook, can do this. Only rhetoric persuades; and Oliver Twist, Bill Sikes, Nancy, Mr. Squeers, Nell Trent, Daniel Quilp, are figures of rhetoric as well as human beings of vivid reality. Beautiful, pathetic, or merely horrible, their features are legendary and disquieting: we forget what they say and remember only what others (including their creator) said about them. When they are funny we find it easy to overlook their size; when they are continuously tragic (Nell, Sikes) it is more than we can bear, and we express our embarrassment in terms that shift the blame from ourselves to them. We yell with laughter at Mr. and Mrs. Squeers, and even perhaps at Fagin; but I think we may take it that they seemed less uproarious and more real in 1836. For monsters, as they slip back into a distance that lends them safety, tend to disguise themselves with humour. Gilles de Rais was every bit as horrible as Haarmann, the butcher of Hanover; but to-day he is Bluebeard in a children's book. I think it is a fair bet that Goering, Laval and Ley (perhaps even Hitler himself, if only because of his appearance) will be Guignol characters in the year 3000, if not before. Yet there is evidently a degree of wickedness which resists the humour of time: it is unlikely that Himmler or Heydrich will ever arouse laughter, for the same reason that has prevented Robespierre and Fouché from becoming figures of fun. It is a question of degree, not of kind; and now that we have moved into another period of entire ruthlessness, we should be able to see Dickens' early creations as they were intended to be seen—should be able to perceive that Fagin is really no funnier than Al Capone, Squeers and Sikes than S.S. men; Nell no more unreal or less pathetic than a starving Polish child, Nancy than some Czech girl haled off to a German soldiers' brothel.

The fantastic quality of Dickens' imagination distracts our attention from the extraordinary consistency of the world described in *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*—the world of criminals, Bohemians and strolling actors, where the struggle for existence, on the fringes not of affluence but of seedy respectability, is carried on in an atmosphere heavy with the fumes of hot gin and water, greasy lumps of unnameable food, and flamboyant clothes seldom washed. In this seething world there is, nevertheless, room for everyone to have his or her counterpart: the characters reflect each other as people do in life. To disapprove of direct contrast in fiction (*mauvais procédé des romantiques*, says Gide in his *Journal des Faux Monnayeurs*) is valetudinarian and finds no confirmation in experience. Our end is often someone else's beginning, their beginning our end; and the climaxes of life consist, as often as not, in the recognition of absolute disparity by those whom circumstances have forced to make common cause. Opposite characters are drawn together by the yearning for perfection which makes man human—a yearning that makes these first novels of Dickens so much more romantic, in the original sense of the word, than books like *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*, where the fantasy is planed down by a less fiercely subjective view of experience. Dickens' admiration for *Don Quixote* led him to give a picaresque surface to stories in which the element of chance turns out to play almost no part; the typical Dickens plot is a pendulum which starts at its furthest point of oscillation, and comes to rest, at the end of the book, in the centre of its arc. And it is in the realisation of what his contrasts imply that the vastly *consolatory* nature of Dickens' art resides: more than any other novelist, except Balzac and Tolstoy, he reconciles us to the totality of human nature. So it is with exquisite satisfaction that we perceive that Nancy is pathetic because she began life as Nell, and that Nell claims our esteem precisely because—when it was after all the easiest solution to her distressful condition—she refrained from ending as Nancy. The statistics of child prostitution in nineteenth century London are appalling, but are seldom taken into account by those who find Little Nell's personality distasteful. She was virtuous, gentle, unselfish, and forbearing; one has met these qualities in combination; no doubt Dickens' sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, displayed them conspicuously; but they ceased to carry conviction in an age in which extremes of character were no longer necessary to survival. We have altered all that: the survivors of the post-war world will be Oliver and Nell, on the one hand, Quilp and Monks and the Artful Dodger on the other, with perhaps Tom Scott (standing on his head as usual) in between. There will be no room for Dick Swiveller or even, I am afraid, for dear old Mr. Brownlow. Anyhow detractors of Nell would do well to realise that their case can only rest upon *what is said about her*—never upon what she herself says. When she speaks, she is sensible or affectionate or solicitous; sentimentality only enters with Dickens' own voice or that of some other character—Marton or the sexton. In herself Nell Trent is exactly what Dickens, in the *dramatis personae*, describes her as being: "a small and delicate child, of much sweetness of disposition."

The male characters in these astonishing novels follow the same pattern. Bill Sikes had, we may be sure, a childhood very similar to Oliver's. His behaviour to the boy is proof (if we need one) of that. Embittered experience satanically hates the innocence it has lost or destroyed in others; so Sikes, and Fagin too, hate and maltreat Oliver, as Peter Grimes maltreats his apprentice in Crabbe's story. But the innocent are none the less perspicacious for being inarticulate, and Oliver's hysterical fear of the chimney-sweep to whom the authorities threatened to apprentice him will have been due to fear, not so much of what the man might do to him, as of that dreadful vision of what he himself might become.

The triumph of character over circumstance is seldom picturesque, and if Oliver and Nell yield nothing to Sikes and Nancy in reality, they certainly yield something to them in sheer vividness. This is in part due to the extraordinary sureness of Dickens' touch in describing the squalid and the sinister. Here a comparison with, say, Eugéne Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* is instructive, for the material is roughly the same. But the Frenchman's picture is grossly overdrawn and curiously vague in outline, in spite of the muted brass and tremolando strings which blare and scrape behind each vociferous sentence. Sue had gusto, but nothing else, and we must turn to parts of Balzac's *Les Illusions Perdues* to find anything comparable to Dickens' symphonic poignancy of effect, in the fiction of that time. For one of the most constant features of criminal milieux is their utter inability to relax; and a tension that never lets up is very difficult indeed to render in art. But in *Oliver Twist* Dickens succeeded in doing just this, because the complex nature of his plot enabled him to paint his shadows as dark as possible. In this London underworld, everyone is always on his guard: trust—and therefore ease—are impossible; if Fagin or the Artful Dodger laughs, it is always in the pleasure or anticipation of someone else's hurt; the gin glass is never raised but a pair of suspicious eyes flickers to and fro above its rim. Sikes himself never laughs, never smiles; the friendly sentence, the word of approval or gratitude, never reach his lips—are struck dead in the monotonous darkness of his thwarted mind. He achieves a kind of greatness through the tension which he creates. Contemporary readers complained of the unrelieved horror of this character; but Dickens, in the preface to the book, replied that some people were indeed wholly bad and that the fact had better be faced. The reasons and the remedy are implied in the rest of the book, along with other hidden connections which I have tried to unravel. *Oliver Twist* touches upon everything—murder, torture, sexual mysteries and depravities, loneliness and despair—everything which is unbearable in human society; but it puts its foot down between the danger points, not on them. True mystery is achieved by throwing bright light on subsidiary details—as Balzac showed when he came to write *Une Ténébreuse Affaire* and *Le Curé de Village*.

These early novels of Dickens attempt no picture of elegance. When he came to do this later on in his career, the result was no more convincing than it is in the novels of Thomas Hardy. When, in *Dombey and Son*, in *Bleak House* (on the whole, perhaps, his finest book), in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens approaches high life, it is never in the expectation of finding anything enjoyable in it. He could never have understood, for instance, Disraeli's delirious pleasure in the mere spectacle of a life in which

money is no object. He had, that is to say, no directly aesthetic preoccupations, no delight in the decorations of existence. His rich men and women are either cold and bored, like Mr. Dombey, or gross and stupid, like the Veneerings; or they are gnawed by guilty secrets, like Lady Dedlock and the second Mrs. Dombey. As Mr. Humphry House has pointed out, in a book which is capital for the understanding of Dickens' place in nineteenth-century England, he never seems to have been visited by an inkling that money is desirable for what it can buy; he mentions it on almost every page, but always with reference to what results from not having it. Dickens' standard of desirable life is represented by people like Mr. Brownlow and the Garlands, or by the stuffy cosiness in which his novels invariably end by landing their heroes and heroines. His imagination is brilliant and profound, but its scope is relatively narrow, and nowhere does this fact emerge so plainly as in his conception of what can be done with life. It takes all sorts to make a world, and Kitty and Levin are unthinkable without their foil, Anna Karenina. Dickens got no nearer to Anna than Edith Dombey; which perhaps explains his inability to devise a more comprehensive goal for his men and women than a genteel sufficiency garnished by perfect respectability.

Dickens knew that variety and colour were essential to the joy of life: it was, indeed, the only part of his creed which could be called aesthetic, and it is to be seen at its most striking in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. This unjustly neglected novel has all the poetry of symbolism, of allegory; the title itself is less a description of the place from which Nell and her grandfather start out at the beginning of the book and to which they never return, than of the book itself. The performing dogs in the inn at night; Mrs. Jarley's caravan; the waxworks the features of which are altered to suit the taste of the public; the tartan-clad dancers on stilts encountered on the lonely country road; Nell singing to the bargees as they glide down the river; the Ruskinesque evocation of the furnace fire and its guardians; the ruined Gothic house in which Nell and her grandfather at last find rest, with its neighbouring church overgrown and encrusted like a sheepdog whose face cannot be seen for hair: this secret journey through a land of fantastic marvels distils a poetry more extreme and daring than Dickens' imagination was ever again to achieve. Nor were his spirits, when the occasion demanded it, ever higher. Quilp and Sampson Brass are intolerable for long at a time, and just when we feel we can bear their company no longer, the curtain rises on Dick Swiveller and the "Marchioness" playing cribbage:

> "With which object in view, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller gravely, "I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health!"

Charles Dickens, your health!

LIONEL CRANFIELD

THE AESTHETES

The Aesthetic Adventure. By WILLIAM GAUNT. *Cape.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

The death of Arthur Symons—but did he not in truth die long since? for the fragile figure was blanched and almost transparent like a spectre already some twenty years ago when once I sat with him under the appropriate caryatids of the old Café Royal,—the death of Arthur Symons has just removed one of the last survivors of "the aesthetic adventure," the editor of *The Savoy*, the friend of Pater and Verlaine. "They are not long, the days of wine and roses," and they become even shorter if, like the poets of the Nineties, one cries for madder music and for stronger wine. Separated from us by two considerable wars, the sons of Dow, John, David, Wat and Thomp (is that the right order?) seem pathetically, rather than majestically, remote, for they had not the mountainous stature that becomes more impressive with distance. Yet these dimming shapes inspire in some of us a gentle piety, and Mr. Gaunt in his new and entertaining book strikes me as too readily unsympathetic. This was already a flaw in his brilliant study of the pre-Raphaelites; and if I notice it more in *The Aesthetic Adventure*, this is no doubt because Baudelaire and Proust, yes and Wilde also, seem to me so profoundly more respectable than Millais and Holman Hunt.

It must be admitted that Mr. Gaunt has a strong case.

> The "aesthetic man" recognised no duties, pursued no interests, save those of art, just as the "economic man" was actuated solely by profit.
>
> He was indifferent to religion, morality, education, political principle or social improvement . . .
>
> The aesthetic movement was never popular in Britain. The denial of moral purpose, the compression of what has to be said into an exact form, the greater importance given to form than to matter, were alien to its complex and romantic genius.

The Aesthetic Adventure is a cautionary tale: drink, drugs, drabs, destitution, gaol, suicide,—what a cumulation of deserved misfortunes overwhelmed "aesthetic man"! And Swinburne was rescued by Watts-Dunton only to become "meaningless." How wise, therefore, of Britain to deplore "the compression of what has to be said into an exact form": let us have no more imitation of those frivolous French who take art seriously! I don't mean that Mr. Gaunt talks like this, though simple readers of his book may come to such unfortunate conclusions. But he does in my opinion underestimate the importance of the change effected by the aesthetic movement in the intellectual climate of this country; and he hardly recognises how profoundly he himself is indebted to the figures he so gaily diminishes. The detachment with which he usually tells the story would have infuriated the England of Tupper. For the Victorian Philistines were not only stupid but intolerant, and everyone who cares for either art or individual liberty should, I think, be grateful to the courage with which this tyranny was assailed and eventually reduced by a small band of very faulty human beings.

The excesses in the theory and practice of aestheticism were for the most part the inevitable reaction against more dangerous, because far more widely spread, excesses in the ways of life and thought adopted by the English middle class. Aestheticism is a doctrine that would be catastrophic if universally adopted, but there has never been any risk of this. On the other hand, we owe the slums to the greedy, ignorant, vulgarly self-seeking and heartless men who prided themselves on being sturdy individualists, who detested individuality, and who consoled their overfed leisure with *Proverbial Philosophy*, *Leaves from a Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, the sermons of Spurgeon, the paintings of Landseer and Frith, the oratorios of Stainer, the architecture of Gilbert Scott. Matthew Arnold's view of life and William Morris's were larger and more valid than Oscar Wilde's, but I suspect that Wilde did more than Arnold or Morris to demolish Victorian narrowness and complacency.

In Mr. Gaunt's book Whistler and Wilde are the principal figures; Swinburne, Pater, Beardsley, George Moore, Sickert, and Roger Fry play important parts; and the enormous cast includes Pater, Simeon Solomon, Ricketts, Pierpont Morgan and a number of illustrious Frenchmen from Baudelaire and Gautier to Degas and Gauguin. Indeed he has tried, I think, to pack too much into one book. The Age of the Sunflower and the Age of the Green Carnation can conveniently be treated together, but the third phase of the Aesthetic Movement, the Age of Significant Form, requires fuller treatment than Mr. Gaunt has space for—all the more because its history has not yet been written. The picture of Roger Fry must seem very dim to anyone who had the happiness to know that wonderful and so surprising man. Elderly readers may find much of the material in the book too familiar—the hideous drama of Wilde has been told a hundred times—there are, moreover, a few inaccuracies. But Mr. Gaunt has provided a useful and entertaining introduction to a fascinating period.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

AN ENGLISH KNIGHT ERRANT

Visions and Memories. By H. W. NEVINSON. *Oxford Press.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

Margaret Davies used to call Nevinson "the knight errant." She was herself a remarkable woman with all the instincts of (female) knight errantry; indeed she was the knight errant of the Consumers' Co-operative Movement—an extraordinary collocation and feat. Her description was eminently correct, as anyone might see merely by reading this volume, in which Evelyn Sharp has collected some of his articles and sketches, critical or autobiographical, and a selection of his poems. Few who knew him would dispute the judgment. Until age began to take some of the physical fire out of him, he had the romantic good looks which exactly fitted the part, and his voice, like his words and actions, was that of a very gentle knight of the days of authentic jousts and chivalry.

He was, therefore, born out of his time, as Gilbert Murray says in his introduction; he belonged by nature to an age which had come to an end centuries before he was born. Professor Murray calls it a "more vital age" than ours, because it was an age of romance, adventure, and ideals. This view is a common one, especially among the readers and writers of fiction, but it is doubtful whether it is sound. Only acute nostalgia or sentimentality can account for the belief that a time ever existed in which all the ladies were beautiful and all the gentlemen gentlemen, devoted to beauty, adventure and ideals. And if it ever did exist, there is little reason for thinking that it would have been any better or more "vital" than our own. The idea that it is more "vital" to be encased in tin and ride about the world in search of adventure, making a nuisance of yourself romantically, than to sit at home and cultivate your garden is a delusion, as Cervantes and Voltaire unsuccessfully tried to teach the world centuries ago.

Nevinson was, however, almost as odd a knight errant as Don Quixote, though there was little or nothing of the quixotic in him. He was very, very English and the knight errant who is also an English gentleman makes a strange mixture. Behind the public school and Oxford exterior lay a deep pool of individuality, illogicality, and even eccentricity. He tilted all his life around the world in quest of adventure, always on the side of the lame dog and the underdog, in the cause of apparently lost causes and against Authority and those who dwell in High Places. Yet it was the romance of power and action and war, of the strong armed man who did things, which really appealed to him, and he was outraged that Lytton Strachey, who, he thought, was a weakling, should make fun of Gordon. The same inconsistency is found in his attitude and relation to war. He was a pacifist, a characteristically English "reasonable" pacifist. One side of him, no doubt, hated war. Yet he lived a good deal of his life chasing wars about the world as a war correspondent, and he did it enthusiastically, and his writings show clearly that war and fighting and soldiers had a deep fascination and romance for him. And then again there was another totally different side to Nevinson, and it is peculiarly evident in these collected articles. He had all the instincts of a scholar, a real love for books and literature, for the precarious flowerings of civilisation which has its roots in leisure and culture. But perhaps in this again he was only characteristically English, for though he himself

thought he would have been happiest in ancient Athens, and though at first sight he seems to belong to the Age of Chivalry, it is possible that he ought to have lived in the eighteenth century, one of those English country gentlemen, a good enlightened Whig, reading the classics, philosophising, occasionally writing essays in admirable English.

LEONARD WOOLF

CONWAY BOY

New Chum. By JOHN MASEFIELD. 9s. 6d.

Mr. Masefield's memory does not suffer a sea change. For most of us, if we remember them at all, our youthful days are seen as either a late Turner or a Hieronimus Bosch, according to our temperament; but for this remarkable man the picture after more than fifty years has become neither rich nor strange. In this latest chapter of his autobiography he tells of his first term on the *Conway*, where, arriving a fortnight late, he is newest of new chums. (Does the word strike queerly? You will soon become accustomed to it with its hundred inflections, from vituperation—"that filthy chum!"—to friendship.) Here on board are none of the veneers of social intercourse that help to make adult life tolerable: newness is in itself repulsive (with which the victim agrees) and must be punished (which he accepts). It is the conscious poet who gives us the terrible sadness of *Dauber;* from the *Conway* boy it is a surprise to hear on one of many evil occasions: "I had not thought that they could be so heartless." Yet, as everywhere, there are some who are friendly and helpful; and, indeed, about the worst of these seamen there is a kind of simplicity. One man, who with very little subtlety has changed his own battered seaboots for those of the new chum, takes him to "mooch," and keeps repeating that he has done "a dirty thing this night; a dirty thing." "When I said that I was sure he hadn't, he said he had, and that he was surely a dirty hound." It is small wonder that this unsophisticated creature tears off the boots and returns them, "with no beastly false shame," when approached the next morning.

But what carries the young Masefield forward through all rebuffs is his eager desire to learn. "Mooching" with a chum, telling ghost stories to H. B., his god-like mentor, reading *Frank Mildmay the Naval Lieutenant*, eating Italian cream in Liverpool, watching a superb ship with a moonsail yard—these are his pleasures, but so are polishing brasswork, cleaning decks (whose wonderful wood, "like dark glass," thrills him), and learning his trade. A prig? No more than young Copperfield, of whom he so constantly reminds us. And like the boy Dickens, he has moments of vision when he sees the limitations of his horizon. Of the effects of this life upon him he says:

> It was profound; it was translation to another world utterly unlike anything before known, read of, or imagined. I had been plucked up by the roots and pitched endways, to strike root or die; now the roots were trying to catch something. I had been very fond of stories of all kinds, and had read and invented many. . . . My coming to the ship put what I now called a "stopper over all" upon any such thought. Stories, reading and invention were shut suddenly away. I had to learn a new language and a new life, word by word, task by task; my past was dead, my present not made.

Later, he looks at the living quarters of ships as well as their masts and sails, and is troubled by what he finds: in one "a sort of morgue eight feet square with stretchers for four corpses"; in another, "a sort of small, frowsy, bare iron box, with a wet floor and a few wooden shelves." On his holiday visits to Liverpool he becomes aware of the harpies who wait to drug and rob the seamen home from arduous voyages. "Pew would have been a gentleman beside some of these blowflies." And mingled with his boyish feeling for the beauty of the river (still described in that clear, ungarnished prose, never falsely lyrical) is the thought that something is very much amiss with the salt water life: not with the men, but with those who would give "iron walls and a shelf and a little daily offal in exchange for a life's work." How much better is this honest, vivid account than the "tall ship" songs, the nostalgic anthology pieces, by which Mr. Masefield the seaman is all too generally known.

NAOMI LEWIS

THREE BOOKS ON GREECE

Images of Greece. By DEREK PATMORE. *Country Life.* 15s.

The Modern Greeks. By A. R. BURN. *Nelson.* 5s.

Greece: British Survey Handbooks. By KATHLEEN GIBBERD. *Cambridge University Press.* 3s.

Two of these are happy books. Not a word in them recalls the tragedy that darkened the skies of Athens while they were passing through the press. The two authors have done their utmost, each in his own way, to record for us their impressions of the beauty of the country and the charm of its inhabitants. What these two felt was curiously similar, but they have chosen very different ways of reaching our imaginations. Mr. Burn has written a rather slight but pleasant and sympathetic essay on various aspects of Greek life, which he has illustrated by a number of photographs. Mr. Patmore, on the other hand, set himself with skilled assistance to make a collection of photographs which it would be difficult to surpass, and round them he has written from his own recollections an intimate and sensitive commentary. Alike in their choice of subject and their skill in composition these photographs are a delight. Here are the ancient monuments seen with a talent in the arrangement that turns the camera into an artist's tool. Here, too, are less familiar subjects from the art and architecture of the Byzantine centuries. No less attractive are the records of modern life—the ploughman and the shepherd boy, the comely fishing boats and the imaginative achievements of the modern builders who piled their shapely masses on island rocks and flung their bridges over rushing streams. These photographs, when they present us with a lovely temple or an ancient theatre, always contrive to arrange their subject so that what emerges is a landscape seen as a satisfying design. The commentary is readable and meets with tact and good nature the curiosity which these unusual records of things seen are certain to arouse.

Mr. Burn is an archaeologist who learned to love and admire the modern Greeks. He writes well about their bravery and their intelligence, their pride, which shows itself in their hospitality, and the love of adventure that has made them at home on all the seven seas. The best things in his little book are the few ballads he has translated and the charming folk tales which prove that the art of making myths is still alive. He insists that the men and women of to-day are the children of the ancients, who reproduce their minds and their bodies, whatever ethnography may say. He shows us in photographs faces that might have sat as models to Phidias and he argues, truly enough, that the interest of the moderns in ideas and their passion for discussion are hereditary. But he does not conceal from us what history and the callipers of the anthropologist have to tell us, about the lavish admixture of Slav and Albanian blood with the

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old Hellenic stock. It may be that modern physiology, when it has finished its study of the influence of climate on human growth, will solve the mystery. This unique climate will bend any invaders to its own pattern. Neither of these books touches on the politics or the modern history of Greece, which is a relief, if it is not a merit.

This omission is made good to some extent by the third book, modestly described as a compilation. The historical chapters are excessively brief and condensed and give little guidance to the interpretation of the tangled chronicle of the years between the two World Wars. The chapters that describe the geography of the country, the daily life of its villages and its economic problems, are more successful. The book ends with a deeply disturbing chapter describing the sufferings of the Greek people under the German occupation. It will serve a useful purpose in spite of its failure to paint clearly the political background behind current events.

H. N. BRAILSFORD

SAROYAN'S CIRCUS

Razzle Dazzle. By WILLIAM SAROYAN. *Faber.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

This title describes the book and the spirited personality of the writer, as well as your own state of mind when you have finished reading it. Mr. Saroyan tells us of his search

> . . . for a strange American word that always made me smile and see all kinds of furious American activity, like girls in front of patriotic parades twirling shiny sticks and prancing around in joyous delirium; cheer leaders in crazy costumes breaking their necks with all kinds of acrobatics in front of half the population of the world . . . people doing things smartly and for no reason in the world; showing off; having fun; raising hell——what was the word?

The word was razzle dazzle, and the book is about all these things. Moreover, all the adjectives in this passage apply to Saroyan's own work: strange, American, furious, shiny, joyous, crazy. Sometimes it even seems to be just "doing things smartly for no reason in the world; showing off, having fun, raising hell." Part of it is pure Marx brothers, some of it reads like the script for another *Hellzapoppin*. You never know quite where you are, but you can be reasonably sure that, whatever it is you expect to find as you turn over a page, you will find something different.

These fifteen plays display the bizarre Saroyan in all the prodigious variety of his moods and gifts; they are accompanied by a series of delightfully personal prefaces adding up to a sort of self-portrait of the man and his beliefs and the working of his mind. "The book," he says in the introduction, "is more than just these fifteen pieces. It is also a writer at work." Here is an example of the writer getting down to work, having discussed, over lunch, the idea of a radio play for the Columbia Workshop series:

> Right after lunch I ran from the Barberry Room to the Great Northern Hotel, dropping books, letters, pencils and nickels all the way and running back quickly to pick them up before somebody else did. The minute I got to my room I sat down and wrote it.

This helter-skelter whirlwind impetuosity is typical of Saroyan. He needs very little excuse to sit down and start writing—just a title is sometimes enough. He tells us that on one occasion he sat at the typewriter with the intention of jotting down a few notes and before he knew where he was he had written a play. One hesitates to dub him a facile writer—his genuinely original talent is too powerful—but there is just enough facility in his writing as well as in his sometimes stereotyped sentiments to make one wish that he would curb his impetuosity, be a little more shy of technical brilliance and penetrate deeper into the heart of things. His symbolism of skyscrapers and drug stores and cinemas, his impatience with traditional forms, his abruptness and at times almost crude naivety—all this is purely American; but he has a deep sense of humanity at large, which, together with the conception of his characters and the world they inhabit, is unconfined by national or racial boundaries. In spite of his tomfoolery—or perhaps because of it—the real core of his work is an over-riding faith in the essential tragi-comic humanity of the little people of the world, whose avowed champion he is. One of his characters expresses it in this way—and if you substitute "writing" for "painting," here is Saroyan himself speaking and professing his faith:

> I believe something that's so ordinary it's almost embarrassing to mention it. I believe there's more good in things than anybody ever bothers to find out, so I keep looking for it all the time, and when I find it I try to keep it in a painting, so other people can see it too. After they see it in a painting, well, they see it for themselves everywhere else, too.

This book is great fun; but when you're through with laughing, you might find more in it than just fun. Perhaps much more.

W. P. RILLA

Sociology of the Renaissance. By ALFRED VON MARTIN. *Kegan Paul.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy. By JACOB BURCKHARDT. *Phaidon Press* 1944. 7*s.* 6*d.*

The first book, published in Germany in 1932, is now available in *The International Library of Sociology and Reconstruction*. Its author, Alfred von Martin, belongs to that school of "constructive" sociologists who think in exemplary "curves" and "stages" of cultural developments. The period of the Renaissance is taken as an "ideal type" of the rise and fall of a *bourgeoisie* in its relation to those classes above and below it which make up the Renaissance society. It is doubtful whether the analogy with other historic societies is acceptable in this dogmatic form. Is not the Florentine bourgeoisie something entirely different from the French *tiers état* or the English middle class? To see in Machiavelli a sixteenth century Oswald Spengler is perhaps less a sociological interpretation than a deplorable "modern" mistake. (The passage of the *Discorsi* to which von Martin refers proves that Machiavelli was a democrat and not a forerunner of Fascism.) All the same, if read with caution, the book is suggestive and interesting, though clearly stamped by the 1931 situation in Germany.

The general reader might still prefer to read Burckhardt's book which the Phaidon Press has just published in a cheap edition. Nothing need be said about this imperishable masterpiece of the great Swiss historian who is still so much our contemporary. One must congratulate the Phaidon Press for offering this book to the public in such an admirably handy and splendidly illustrated shape—certainly one of the finest achievements of book production in recent years.

English Story. Fifth Series. Edited by WOODROW WYATT. *Collins.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

"Buildings must be on the old foundations," says a character in the editor's allegorical foreword. Certainly these stories seem to show a return to older models than Hemingway, but they are none the worse for that. Characters in isolation are in any case the strongest point with our short story writers (near-poets rather than near-dramatists), but here are also some astringency of plot, a freer play of imagination, and even at times a dry romanticism. The failures are few (generally where the source is too apparent); there are several modest successes, one or two very well told stories, and a surprise—the reward of the persevering anthology reader. William Sansom invests the drab familiar landscape with uneasy symbolism in his frightening story, *The*

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"There's no sweeter tobacco comes from Virginia and no better brand than the 'Three Castles'"
W. M. Thackeray, 'The Virginians'

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Vertical Ladder : Elizabeth Bowen anatomises an ex-officer's frustration through the eyes of his seven-year-old daughter : Denton Welch presents a memorable boy in the *Father and Son* or early Henry James manner : sin is revealed to O'Faolain's jolly, guileless monks and nuns. The surprise, curiously placed between Treece's madman and Rhys Davies' miner, is Mary Lavin's *Fogger Halt* ; unexpected, detached, delicately ironic, it seems too good to maintain its quality to the end. But it does. This, and the stories previously mentioned, make the collection well worth a Sunday afternoon's study.

Week-end Competition
No. 784

Set by S.E.

The Moberly Committee allots paper, in addition to their usual quota, to publishers who can make out a good case for the exceptional value of a particular book. Competitors are invited to submit claims (in not more than 150 words) for any of the following works : *Troilus and Cressida, The Country Wife, Candide, Tom Jones, Pride and Prejudice,* Kilvert's Diary, Samuel Butler's Notebooks, Shaw's *Unpleasant Plays,* George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man, Zuleika Dobson, South Wind,* Clive Bell's *Civilisation,* and translations of *Les Illusions Perdues* and Maupassant's stories.

Entries by February 20th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 781

Set by G. B. Mickleburgh

The usual prizes are offered for the best 200-word explanation of the situation adumbrated by the following recent entry in the personal column of an American journal :

"A.S.B. Please listen to me, wherever you are. I saw it all ; Graham was out of the room at the time and didn't come in until 15 minutes after your mother left. You must believe me.—Matthew."

Report by G. B. Mickleburgh

There was a good yield of entries, humorous and serious. Many ingenious reconstructions failed on the ground of complete unplausibility. Several competitors pictured Graham as a dog : in two entries he was a doped greyhound ! Competitors who let themselves go in ancient and modern American slang had evidently overlooked the tone of the advertisement. In the final selection were L.E.J., L.G. Udall, Edith M. Saw, J. I. Wadey, W.H.G., T. Naisby, Sir Robert Witt, M.B.S., Pte. H. Dowding, and Sgt. Muse, the last four meriting special mention. Peter Alexander is commended for a Damon Runyon impression which just failed to come off. Granville Garley's artifice in arranging for the game to be played on his own ground deserves reward. I recommend that a first prize of two guineas go to D.R.S. for a convincing entry which well reflects the atmosphere of the "personal" ; one guinea to Alexander Scott, and half a guinea each to Granville Garley and A.M.P.

DEAR SIR,

I dare say it will interest you to know the true story behind the advertisement you quote in your NEW STATESMAN competition. It concerns my widowed sister, Mrs. Burmeister, and her two children, Alison, now in her freshman year at College, and Graham, a boy of twelve ; and it started at a farewell party given by the Hospital At Home for the medical unit to which I have the honour to belong.

At this party my sister told, as any indulgent mother might, of a tender, but to adult ears amusing, "goodnight" she had overheard between Alison and one of her admirers. Unfortunately, after her departure, the story was repeated, this time in a less amiable form and in the hearing of Graham.

Returning home, Graham seems to have recounted the episode with so little clarity that Alison was led to believe her mother guilty not only of indiscretion but unkindness. Hurt and indignant, she packed a bag and went off to stay with a girl friend. Which one, Graham had no idea. Consternation reigned, and finally my advertisement (based on what information we then had) was decided upon.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Stevenson (Major, U.S. Army).
D.R.S.

FOOL'S MATE. By LUCIA LOVEDAY.
PART II. WHERE IS AUGUSTA ?

Synopsis : Augusta S. Billings, wife of Graham Billings, a struggling doctor, is expecting a baby. Her mother, wealthy Mrs. Vandergrift, who opposed her marriage to Graham, is trying to gain legal custody of the child on the grounds of Graham's poverty. Graham's research work takes him to Boston, where he stays at the home of Matthew de Marly, an old school friend. Mrs. Vandergrift and Flint, her lawyer, call there to see Graham. They are shown into the library to wait, where Matthew is seated unseen by them. What he hears makes him remain hidden. Flint chances to find a blank sheet of paper with Graham's signature on it, and uses it to forge a formal agreement yielding custody of the child to Mrs. Vandergrift. They then leave, telling the butler that they can wait no longer. As soon as Graham returns, Matthew tells him what he has seen. Graham leaves at once to warn Augusta ; but is too late. Mrs. Vandergrift has shown her the forged agreement and Augusta has fled, leaving a brief note for Graham. Broken-hearted, Graham telephones Matthew and implores his help.

(Now read on.)

ALEXANDER SCOTT

I wish to register a strong protest ; the subject of this competition did not first appear, as is stated, in an American journal ; it was in *The Lancashire Pioneer* of August 16th, last. I am compelled, at the risk of giving away trade secrets, to explain the entry's full significance ; rather this be published than the efforts of facetious imaginations.

I am a member of the well-known (locally) firm of sanitary appliance manufacturers, Bowles and Odd. My partner, Arthur Samson Bowles travels extensively with samples of our work ; not knowing his exact address from day to day I communicate any urgent business to him via the personal column of *The Pioneer* with the aid of a code.

In the example you quote, "Graham," "15 minutes" and "mother" (the only relevant words, the rest is padding), mean simply "Glossop wants 15 lavatory seats by Monday." If instead I had used "Basil," "10 hours" and "sister" my partner would have understood that Bolton needed 10 ball-cocks by Saturday. This ingenious method enables us to keep ahead of business rivals. Matthew Odd

P.S.—The usual prizes might be acceptable to my firm as partial compensation, if accompanied by a letter of apology. GRANVILLE GARLEY

THE TRUE SOLUTION

The heroine is *A.S.B.*
She is serving in Italy.
Her address of course,
Is American Red Cross.
Graham is her beau,
Matthew's in the know.
Her *mother*, a Boston dame
Who never plays the game,
Tells lies good and hearty,
About Graham at her party.
Said G. tore off his pants
And all guests looked askance.
Actually, M. knows that G.
Stayed in the "gents" during tea.
To A.S.B. Matthew beseeches
To disbelieve the tale of breeches,
And quickly cable to her honey
"Tout savoir c'est tout pardonner."

A.M.P.

HOWARDS' ASPIRIN

does not *smash* your ailments.

It very, very gently *soothes, relieves and ends many a trouble.*

See the name HOWARDS' on every tablet

HOWARDS & SONS LTD., ILFORD
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"Of course it is. It's White Horse." "*But this tastes like pre-war whisky.*" "That's just what it is." "*How do you mean ?*" "Well, the White Horse you get today was growing old when the war was young. It takes years to bring whisky to such perfection." "*But this is the sixth year of war.*" "Oh, it's no secret. They laid down large stocks of White Horse in the days of plenty. That's why the White Horse you get today — when you're lucky — is still as fine as a fine liqueur."

WHITE HORSE

MAXIMUM PRICES :—*Bottle*, 25/9 ; *Half-bottle*, 13/8, *as fixed by* The Scotch Whisky Association.

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